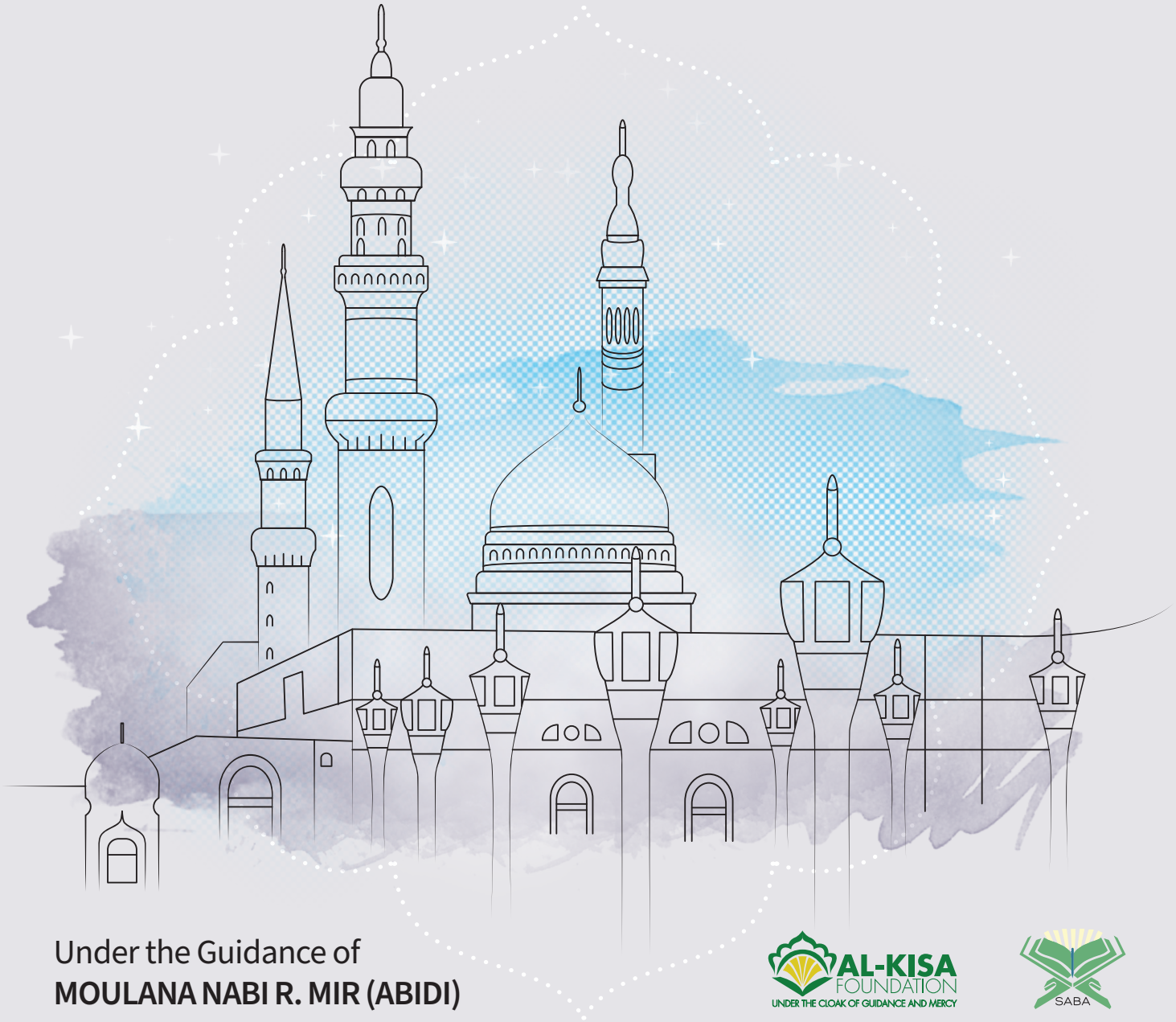
STEPS TO PERFECTION

GRADE 7

An Islamic Curriculum For Youth



Under the Guidance of
MOULANA NABI R. MIR (ABIDI)

AL-KISA FOUNDATION
UNDER THE CLOAK OF GUIDANCE AND MERCY

SABA

STEPS TO PERFECTION

An Islamic Curriculum for Youth

GRADE

7

AL-KISA FOUNDATION
UNDER THE CLOAK OF GUIDANCE AND MERCY

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the beloved Imām of our time عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف. May Allah ﷻ hasten his reappearance and help us to become his true companions.

Acknowledgments

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ:

On the Day of Resurrection, the ink of the scholars will be weighed up against the blood of the martyrs, and the ink of the scholars will be heavier than the blood of the martyrs.

(*Nahj al-Faṣāḥah*, Saying #3222)

We are especially thankful to the Kisa Australia Team, Kisa Mission Team, Shaykh Salim Yusufali, Shaykh Ehsan Ahmadi, Dr. Sheikh Mansour Leghaei, Srs. Urooj Kazmi, Samina Ali, Bhavani Ali, Sabika Mithani, Arifa Hudda, Fatima Falahati, Zahra Sabur, Liliana Villalvazo, Amna Hussain, Fatima Hussain, Zahra Eslami, Fathema Abidi, Zehra Abbas, Maryam Hakimpanah, Maryam Ershad, Zahra Memar, Rabab Jafri, Maria Al-Janabi, Shamama Zehra, Irum Abbas, Marwa Kachmar, Nida Syed, Zainab Hussain, Anjum Afzal, Sarah Silvaggi, Mina Mozaffarian, Aliya Dhanjy, Lina Dewjee, Sumiya Baqri, Sahar Zaidi, Yamna Jafri, Sana Abbas, Wajma Ahad, Rumina Hashmani, Maliha Abdi, Sakina Abdallah, Tasneem Hudda, Tahseen Shariff, Noor Nasrallah, Hanan Wazne, Swaleha Virjee, Farhana Mohamedali, Houra Khalife, Julie Karaki, Brs. Taymaz Tabrizi, Ali Alsamail, Abidali Mohamedali, Mohammad Abbas Virjee, Mohammad Hendijanifard, Mohamedtufayl Mohamedali, the Tabatabai family, all the illustrators who allowed us to use their illustrations, SABA, SABA Sunday School Team, RISE Academy, Kisa Kids syllabus committees, teachers, and staff for their support and assistance in the development and testing of the curriculum.

SABA and Al-Kisa Foundation are also very thankful to the Islamic organizations and schools of Ahlul Bayt at London-Stanmore, London-Hujjat, Vancouver, Minnesota, Toronto, and all others whose syllabus and books were used for the inspiration and creation of this curriculum.

Please remember all the people involved in this project in your prayers.

Authors and Editors: Dr. Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi) and Curriculum Committee

We pray to Allah to give us the strength and tawfīq to perform our duties and responsibilities.

With duʿās,

Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi)

Transliteration Chart

Arabic terms in this book have been transliterated according to the following guidelines*:

ء	a, i, or u (initial form)	ص	ṣ
ء	ʾ(medial or final form)	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	ʿ
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y

ـَ	a	آ / ـَا / ىٰ	ā
ـِ	i	ـِي	ī
ـُ	u	ـُو	ū
ـّ	double letter		

*Please note that due to limitations, the transliteration is not 100% accurate in capturing tajwīd rules.

Please Note: The sukūn or sākin generally has two shapes, ۠ and ۡ which are both pronounced the same. For the purposes of this material, the ۠ has been used.

Symbol Usage

Throughout this work, when taking the name of any of the revered personalities in Islamic history, including Allah ﷻ, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, his select family members, and religious scholars, we have employed the following Arabic symbols to show the reverence to each of them. As a part of Islamic culture, readers are requested to send the salutations upon these personalities when they read this work.

	All glory belongs to God, the Glorified and Exalted Used exclusively for God (Allah ﷻ)
	Mighty and Majestic (is He) Used exclusively for God (Allah ﷻ)
	Blessings of Allah be upon him and his immaculate progeny Used exclusively for Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ
	Peace be upon him Used for one honored male
	Peace be upon all of them Used for three or more honored men or women or a combination
	Peace be upon her Used for one honored female
	May Allah, the Most High, hasten his noble return Used exclusively for Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف
	May his spirit be sanctified Used for religious scholars

Preface and Introduction by Moulana Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi)

Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Islamic Center

Salāmun ʿalaykum

Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:

ن ۚ وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ

"Nūn! [I swear] by the pen and what they inscribe!" [1]

All praise is for Allah ﷻ, the Lord and Nurturer of the worlds. It is an honor and pleasure to address you: dear teachers, administrators, educators, and parents. This verse of the Qurʾān demonstrates the sanctity of writing. When Allah ﷻ takes an oath by those who write and that which has been written, it clearly demonstrates the lofty status of writing and books. If we do a proper job in actualizing the potential of this medium, then Allah ﷻ guarantees us a high position. We know that Islam places a lot of emphasis on education as a whole.

Imām ʿAlī ؑ has a beautiful narration where he says:

أَوَّلُ الدِّينِ مَعْرِفَتُهُ، وَكَمَالُ مَعْرِفَتِهِ التَّصْديقُ بِهِ، وَكَمَالُ التَّصْدِيقِ بِهِ تَوْحِيدُهُ، وَكَمَالُ تَوْحِيدِهِ الاخْلاصُ لَهُ، وَكَمَالُ الاخْلاصِ لَهُ نَفْيُ الصِّفَاتِ عَنْهُ، لِشَهَادَةِ كُلِّ صِفَة أَنَّها غَيْرُ المَوْصُوفِ، وَشَهَادَةِ كُلِّ مَوْصُوف أَنَّهُ غَيْرُ الصِّفَةِ....

"The first thing in religion is the recognition of Him (Allah); and the perfection of recognizing Him is to witness Him; and the perfection of witnessing Him is to believe in His Oneness; and the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to regard Him as Pure; and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed, and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute…" [2]

Here, the Commander of the Faithful [Amīr al-Muʾminīn ؑ] is demonstrating the importance of instilling systematic knowledge *(ʿilm)* and a deeper recognition and cognizance *(maʿrifah)* into our children, especially our youth. The Imām ؑ indicates that complete and perfect *maʿrifah* can only be reached by learning and grasping the true concept of Monotheism *(Tawḥīd),* and the beliefs that stem from it from a young age.

Human beings love beauty and goodness innately, and because Allah ﷻ is perfect Beauty; and Islam, the Qurʾān, and the Ahlul Bayt ؑ are the manifestations of Allah's Beauty, when we find the knowledge and deeper recognition of this beauty, we will automatically be drawn to it, and it will blossom in our hearts. Similarly, if we can achieve this for our youth, then they will automatically be drawn to it, and will be able to truly connect with their faith, and become ambassadors of Islam, the Qurʾān, and the Ahlul Bayt ؑ. It will also cultivate within them a drive and passion to fulfill their roles and responsibilities to the best of their abilities.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Qalam (68), Verse 1.
2 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 1.

It goes without saying of course, that this knowledge must be from the correct sources, comprehensive in nature, and have topics that are relevant for the guidance of our youth—particularly for issues and challenges that they face on a daily basis. The knowledge that our youth acquire should be foundational and a precursor to improve, learn further, and build a love for Islam and the Qurʾān within themselves.

After delving further, we find that this education can be obtained in two formats: informal and formal. Informal education entails formats such as speeches, classes, discussions, and a teacher's interactions within a classroom. Formal education refers to the standards and guidelines that teachers follow when teaching, commonly referred to as the curriculum. While both forms of education are integral to the learning process, a cohesive curriculum is crucial in ensuring that the deliverance of education is done so in an organized and logical sequence.

Additionally, as we know, Islam is a **complete** way of life. Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"Say: 'Surely my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are all for Allah, Lord (and Nurturer) of the worlds.'" [3]

In an ideal world, our education system would be all-encompassing. However, this is difficult to implement due to various limitations and circumstances. For example, even full-time Islamic schools generally only allocate a few hours a week for Islamic studies. Similarly, weekend schools only operate for a few hours once a week, at most for about 30-34 weeks during the year. Therefore, weekend schools and full-time Islamic schools overall do not have the capacity to adopt a completely integrated system for our children to learn Islam in conjunction with other necessary subjects. As a result, most schools focus on these five Islamic subjects: Qurʾān, *ʿAqāʾid* (Beliefs), *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence), History, and *Akhlāq* (Morals and Etiquettes). It is with this in mind that we are honored to compile and develop a Pre-K to Grade 12 Curriculum for Islamic Studies and Qurʾān, as well as for life skills and contemporary issues related to our daily lives.

Alḥamdulillāh, Al-Kisa Foundation is pleased to present the Islamic Studies Curriculum, which focuses on four core subjects: *ʿAqāʾid*, *Fiqh*, History, and *Akhlāq*. Inshāʾallāh, we hope to further develop the fifth core subject, Qurʾān, in areas such as Tajwīd (rules related to recitation), *Mafāhīm* (understanding), and *Tafsīr* (commentary and deeper understanding). The journey to create this Curriculum started over 20 years ago, but the true emphasis and efforts were over the last 6 years where we piloted the lessons, and got feedback from the community. At this time, the Pre-K to Grade 6 Curriculum has undergone many iterations and revisions to the extent that it has reached a satisfactory level.

Alḥamdulillāh, the Grade 7-12 Curriculum has reached some great milestones with your *duʿās*. Having been piloted for a few years to test the content, incorporate feedback, many editings, etc., with the blessings of Allah ﷻ and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, it is now being printed professionally. This Curriculum is a compilation of different resources, both existing and new, based on input from various individuals and institutions. As a result, some of the books or lessons are quite large, and it is at the discretion of the teacher to skip certain lessons if need be, since extra material was added as additional resources. Although we had initially created a scope and sequence, and planned to fully develop the lessons ourselves, we ran into some unforeseen hurdles with the COVID-19 Pandemic, but have been able to overcome those by the blessings of the Almighty.

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6), Verse 162.

A more detailed overview on how this Curriculum was developed is outlined below.

METHODS USED TO COMPILE THIS CURRICULUM

1. As with all projects under Al-Kisa Foundation, the curriculum was guided by scholars, educators, and the Kisa mission team.

2. Several resources were used in collaboration with other developers, including, but not limited to, madrasah.net, the Kawther Learning Center Team, the Islamic Syllabus Team, the Sirat Curriculum Team, as well as books of great scholars like Shahīd Motahhari, Āyatullāh Ja'far Sobhani, etc.

3. The first step was identifying the challenges faced by youth and creating a scope and sequence of this information by organizing it into five categories: ʿaqāʾid, fiqh, history, akhlāq, and contemporary issues. After this, we designed 64 lessons in order to fit the average Sunday school schedule, also bearing in mind that the material could be expanded further for a full-time school.

4. Next, each lesson was given guiding points by myself or other scholars to guide the outcome and method of each lesson.

5. Each lesson was then written by an educator, reviewed once again by a scholar to verify the content, and finally given back to an educator to create worksheets, etc.

6. This would finalize the content portion of the lesson, after which the graphics team would create the layout and graphics for each.

7. Of course, this was a monumental task with many individuals involved, all of which was tracked using a project management software.

Once the final review was done by myself, the curriculum, along with supporting slides, activities, and games, was published online on our Salam Online website (www.salamonline.education) for the benefit of others. I am humbled to be a part of this process, and am very aware that despite our best efforts, there is lots of room for improvement. I humbly ask all of the parents, educators, students, school administrators, and others who utilize this curriculum to please bless us with your constructive feedback, criticism, suggestions, and comments. After all, only the Qurʾān is free from all defects and mistakes!

Additionally, please do consider sharing your resources with us so that we can possibly incorporate them into the curriculum and enhance it inshāʾAllāh. We are interested in any teaching methodologies, supplemental curriculum, or additional resources used. Digital resources, such as presentations, games, and quizzes, are also appreciated and can be shared with **admin@alkisafoundation.org**. Jazākallāhu khayran!

We hope that you and your children enjoy this Curriculum, and that it is beneficial to the community at large, *inshāʾAllāh*. Please do remember us in your *duʿās,* and provide us with any feedback so that we can make future improvements. We look forward to hearing from you.

We pray to Allah ﷻ to give us the strength and the Divine providence and ability *(tawfīq)* to perform our duties and responsibilities.

With Duʿās,
Nabi R. Mir (Abidi)

About the Board ʿĀlim

Moulana Nabi R. Mir (Abidi) is a scholar, an educator, a father, and an enthusiast for creating educational infrastructure and Islamic resources for the benefit of the global community. He is a pioneer of always thinking "outside of the box" by supporting the creation of innovative materials to engage young readers to pick up Islamic books, interact with Qurʾānic games, learn from the Steps to Perfection Curriculum, and begin their life-long journey of holistic education.

Being a dedicated student and graduate of *Darse Khārij* from the *Ḥawzah* (the highest level of Islamic Studies in the seminary), Moulana Abidi understands the intrinsic value of Islamic education. Also, having grown up in India, and now residing in the United States, he has had the honor of traveling to various communities and meeting many community leaders. He values the importance of collaboration and working together to optimize our communal potential and create open source platforms so that information and resources are available and accessible to everyone around the world.

You, dear reader, are now part of the Al-Kisa family.
Share the word, and join the mission.

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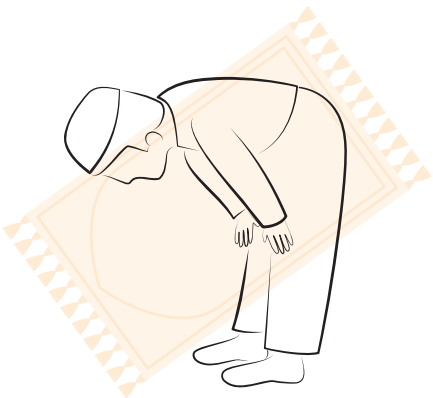

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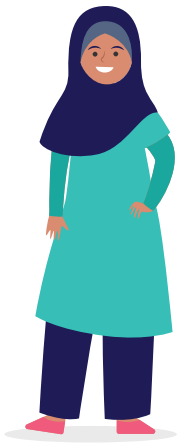

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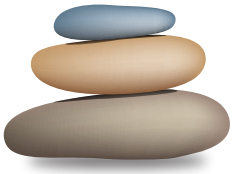

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ʿAQĀʾID
(BELIEFS)

CHAPTER 1

Why Religion?

1.1 The Purpose of Human Beings

1.2 Need for Religion

1.3 Islam: The Best Religion

1.1 The Purpose of Human Beings

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Learn what the purpose of the human being is.
- Learn the three tools that can help one reach this purpose.
- Learn about how true worship *(ʿibādah)* can help a person reach one's purpose.

DĪN: religion, way of life

ʿIBĀDAH: worship, an action that is done with the intention of getting closer to Allah ﷻ

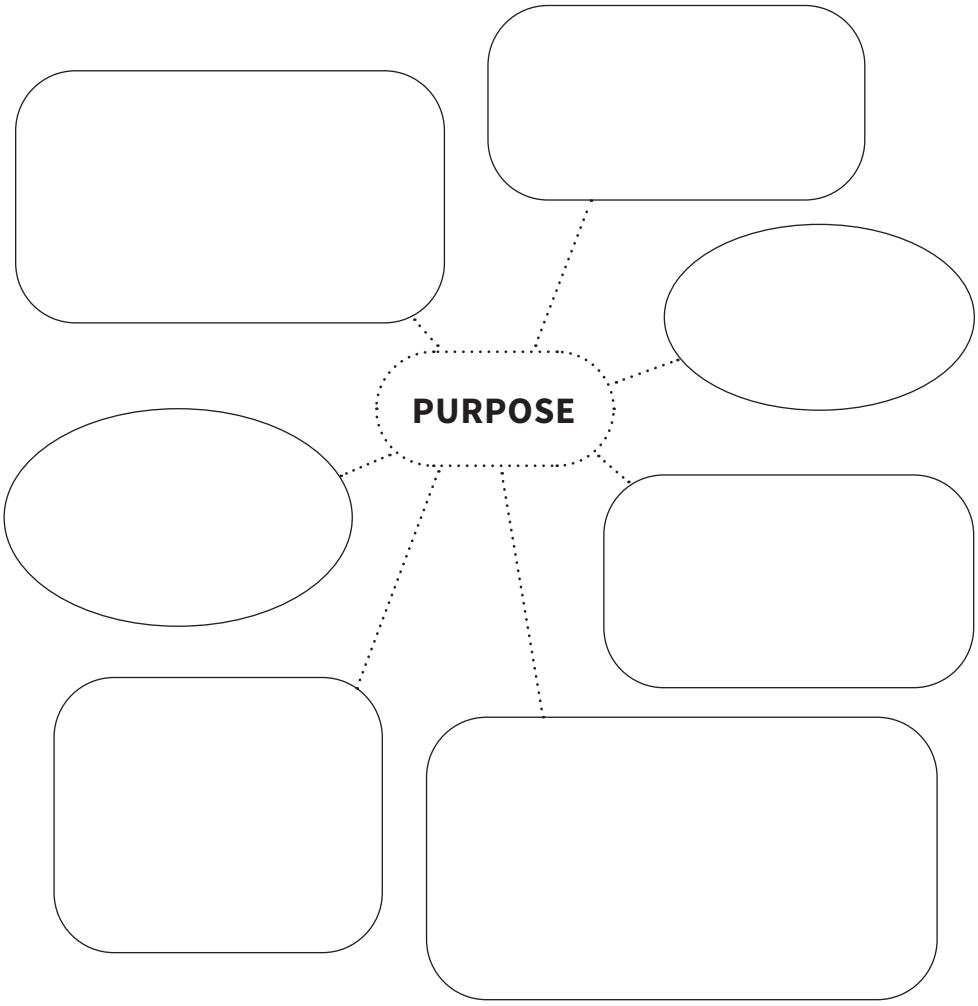
QURB: closeness (often used in reference to Allah ﷻ)

KAMĀL: perfection, being our best selves and trying to attain closeness to Allah ﷻ

HADAF OR PURPOSE: the reason for which something exists, is done, made, or used

Activity 1.1a: Pre-Reading Reflection

What types of words/thoughts/phrases come to mind when you hear the term 'purpose?' Create a word-web with the word 'purpose.'



Activity 1.1b: Vocabulary

On a blank paper, draw a map with the words: ***dīn***, ***ʿibādah***, ***qurb***, and **purpose**. Where does everything go on the map? Where is your destination? What obstacles do you face on the way?

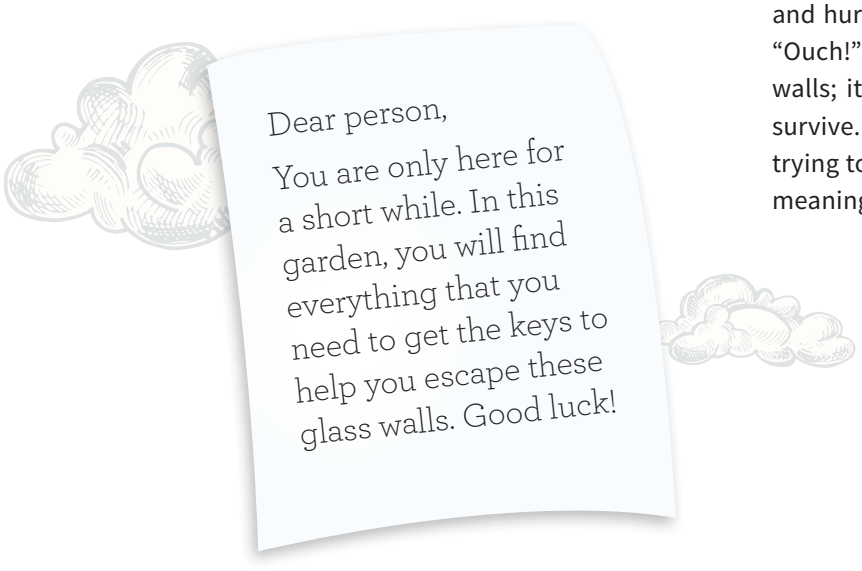
IBRAHIM'S DREAM

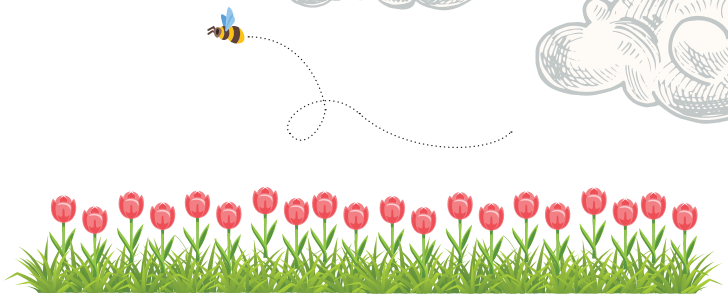
Part 1: The Mysterious Garden

Ibrahim had just come home from soccer practice, where his team was getting ready for the big 7th grade match, so he fell asleep as soon as his head touched his pillow. Later on, he woke up in a complete daze, confused, and unsure of where he was or how he had gotten there. *Where am I?* he thought to himself. He sat up, rubbed his eyes, and blinked. He pinched himself. "Ouch!" He was definitely awake!

Ibrahim stood up, overwhelmed with the scent of flowers, the buzzing of bees, and the sound of the wind. He definitely was not in his bedroom anymore. Had he fallen asleep in a park somewhere? All of the small sounds surrounding him seemed amplified—more vibrant and intense than he remembered them to be. It was as if everything around him was trying to tell him something really important. He began to roam around, trying to discover an answer to this mystery he suddenly found himself in.

Ibrahim walked around observing his surroundings. All of a sudden, he banged his face into a glass wall that seemed to pop up out of nowhere. "Ouch!" he cried out in pain, cautiously checking his head to make sure that he was not bleeding anywhere. His eyes caught the glint of light reflecting from the pane in front of him. Still processing this crystalline barrier, his eyes scanned around him, looking for the end-point. There did not appear to be one no matter how much he turned. Where did these glass walls come from? Ibrahim looked around. His eyes widened as he realized that he was trapped inside of the glass walls! Ibrahim started to pace back and forth in nervousness when he noticed a piece of paper crinkling under his foot.


Dear person,
You are only here for a short while. In this garden, you will find everything that you need to get the keys to help you escape these glass walls. Good luck!



Ibrahim continued to walk around the garden. He thought to himself: *Where could I be? Why am I here? What is on the other side of this glass?*

As he continued to roam around trying to avoid the expansive glass walls (which was harder than it looked), he tripped over a huge rock and fell flat on his face amidst a field of tulips. Grateful for the soft landing, he looked up at the tulips in front of him. These tulips, in particular, were an odd shade though; they seemed to have lines on them… or were those letters? *Words written on a tulip?* he thought quizzically.

Ibrahim sat up and looked closely at the tulips, picking one of them off of its stem. Holding it in his hand, he took apart one of the flowers and carefully studied its petals. There was a message written on the petals: "Who created you? What purpose were you made for?" The oddity of the situation was not lost on Ibrahim as he began to think about the questions posed on the tulip. He had not truly contemplated these questions before. *Hmm, this might be a clue! Maybe it has something to do with how I can get out of this strange place,* he thought; and after seeing the petals, he really wanted to get the answers.

Suddenly, Ibrahim heard his stomach make a noise, and he felt thirst itching his throat. He saw a stream in the distance and hurried toward it, only to bump into another glass wall! "Ouch!" Ibrahim rubbed his head. He had to escape these walls; it was the only way he could find water to drink and survive. He was sure that whoever had sent the message was trying to help him find a way out, and reach something more meaningful beyond these glass walls.

OUR PURPOSE AS HUMAN BEINGS

STOP AND REFLECT: How can you define 'purpose' in your own words? Provide an example of something that has a purpose. For example, your purpose in most sporting activities is to score a goal.

Activity 1.1c: Discussion Questions

DIRECTIONS: After reading the story above, discuss the following questions with a partner:

1. Walls are often used in narratives to represent what concept(s)?

2. In your own words, explain the moral message of this story.

3. Explain how the story of Ibrahim relates to us finding our purpose in this life?

Our purpose in life is to reach perfection…to become as close as possible to Allah ﷻ.

In this story, Ibrahim is trying to figure out where he is, and what his purpose is. A **purpose** is defined as 'the reason for which something exists, is done, made, or used.' This extends to all creatures in existence: from a seed that turns into a fruit tree, to the bee that pollinates flowers. Everything has a purpose in this world—including us!

When we come into this world, we have to find what our purpose is and fulfill that.

If we realize that everything has a purpose, then we should ask ourselves: "What is our purpose as human beings in this world?" In the story above, Ibrahim found a clue asking him what his purpose is, which motivated him to act in certain ways. This is like the world we live in. Our purpose in life is to reach perfection, which in Islam means to become as close as possible to Allah ﷻ. In Arabic we say: *Qurb-ilāhi*—closeness to my God [Allah ﷻ].

Activity 1.1d: The Resolution (Extension Activity)

Ibrahim's story ends in a cliffhanger; if you were given creative liberties to resolve the predicament Ibrahim has found himself in, how would you end his story? What could help Ibrahim break free of his glass prison?

As Shīʿah Muslims, we believe that we can reach the point of making the best decisions in all situations. We pray to Allah ﷻ that He always helps us as He is the All-Perfect, and the All-Knowing, so we should never stop striving to get close to Him.

Although the teachings of the Qurʾān and the Divine guides have a special role in guiding us, things that happen in our lives or that we see in the world around us can also guide us toward Allah ﷻ.

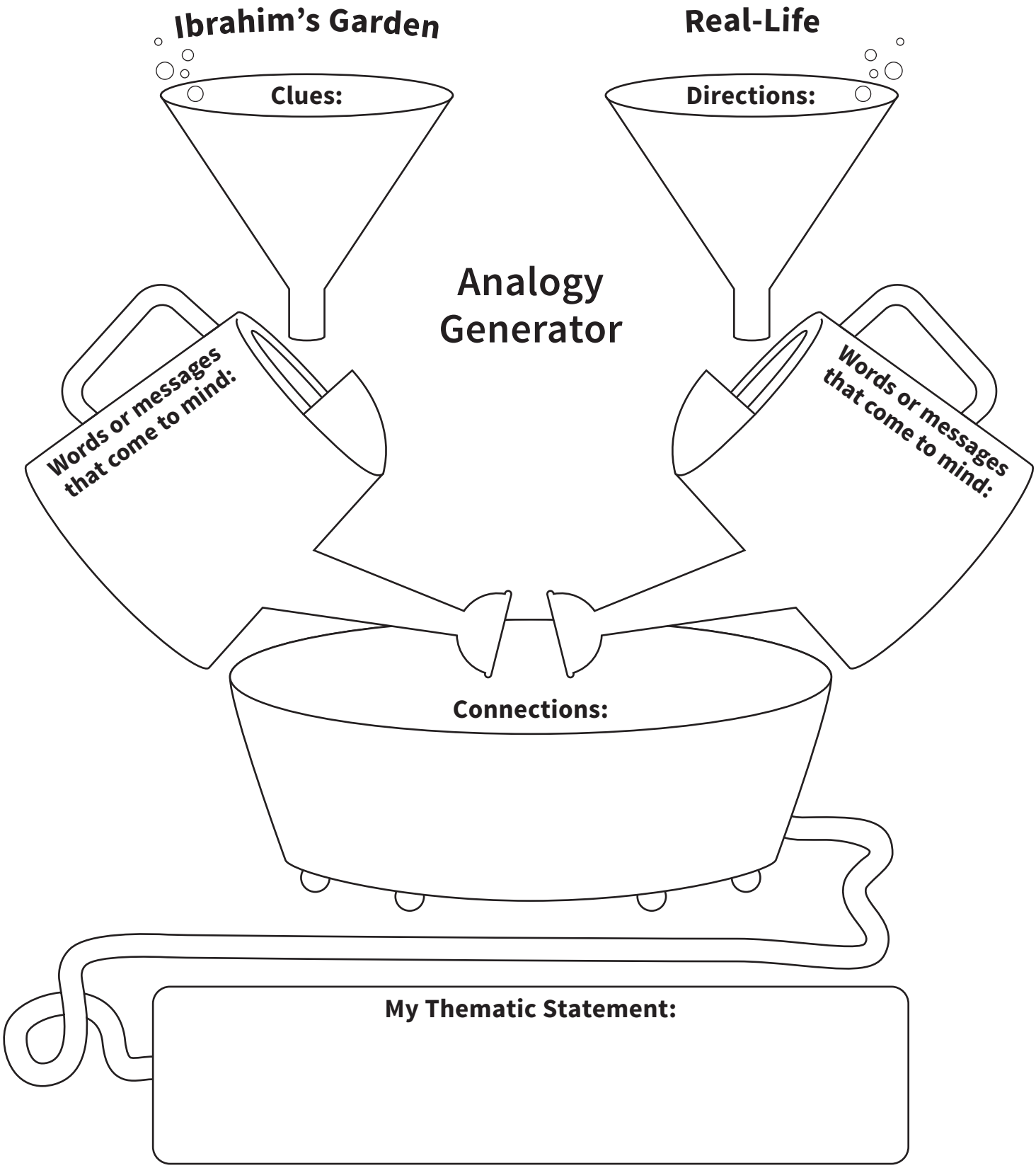
In previous years, we have talked about various proofs of Allah's existence. Allah ﷻ is All-Perfect and All-Knowing, and He created us with the purpose of becoming our best selves through following Islam. After using these and other such proofs, we come to the realization that our life must have some purpose, and this purpose must be taught to us from our All-Perfect Creator—Allah ﷻ. Similarly, we have talked about how an All-Generous and All-Merciful Creator gave us Divine guides like the 124,000 Prophets عليهم السلام and the 12 Imāms عليهم السلام.

Allah ﷻ has given us three tools through which we can reach Him, and perfect ourselves:

1. **ʿIbādah:** Worship.
2. **Ibtilāʾ:** Tests and trials.
3. **Maʿrifah:** Deep understanding.

Activity 1.1e: Figuratively Speaking

- How do the clues which Ibrahim received in that strange garden relate to the directions we have been given in our lives?
- Summarize the analogies present in the story into one or two sentences that capture the theme.



THE FIRST STEPS

Our purpose in this life—*qurb* or closeness to Allah ﷻ—can only be found through the path that Allah ﷻ Himself has defined because we believe that He is our Creator, the All-Perfect, and the All-Knowing. Who knows what is best for us other than Allah ﷻ? If we believe that Allah ﷻ is All-Knowledgeable and cares for us more than anyone else, then we need to understand and accept that the only way to gain closeness to Him is by doing what He likes and what He knows is best for us—and that is by following the religion of Islam.

We all need Allah ﷻ, who is our Creator, in order to survive; and we need to become closer to Him to reach our purpose. The path to perfection means acting in the way that He likes, and staying away from what He dislikes. This is how we practice the first step to perfection—by doing His *ʿibādah* [worshiping Allah ﷻ]. Obeying Allah ﷻ and serving His creations helps us to become the best we can.

As we try to reach perfection, we need to get rid of the barriers and negative qualities that prevent us from moving forward, and fill our souls with goodness, moral character, and righteous deeds.

QUICK WRITE: What is one thing that you can add to your personal characteristics that may take you closer to reaching perfection in the eyes of Allah ﷻ?

STORY CONNECTION: Negative qualities and characteristics that we have are like glass walls—sometimes they may be hard to see or detect, but they are obstacles that stop us from fulfilling our true purpose in life. This is why we must reflect on ourselves and our actions.

When we make good choices out of obedience to Allah ﷻ, He helps us by granting us special mercy, and brings us closer to Him *(qurb)*, and allows us to reach higher levels both in this world, and more importantly in Paradise.

The Prophet ﷺ said that: "This world is like a farm for us to plant our good deeds so that we will see the fruits of our labor in the next world." [1]

To help us fulfill our purpose of getting closer to Him, Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān that **everything in this world** was created to help us:

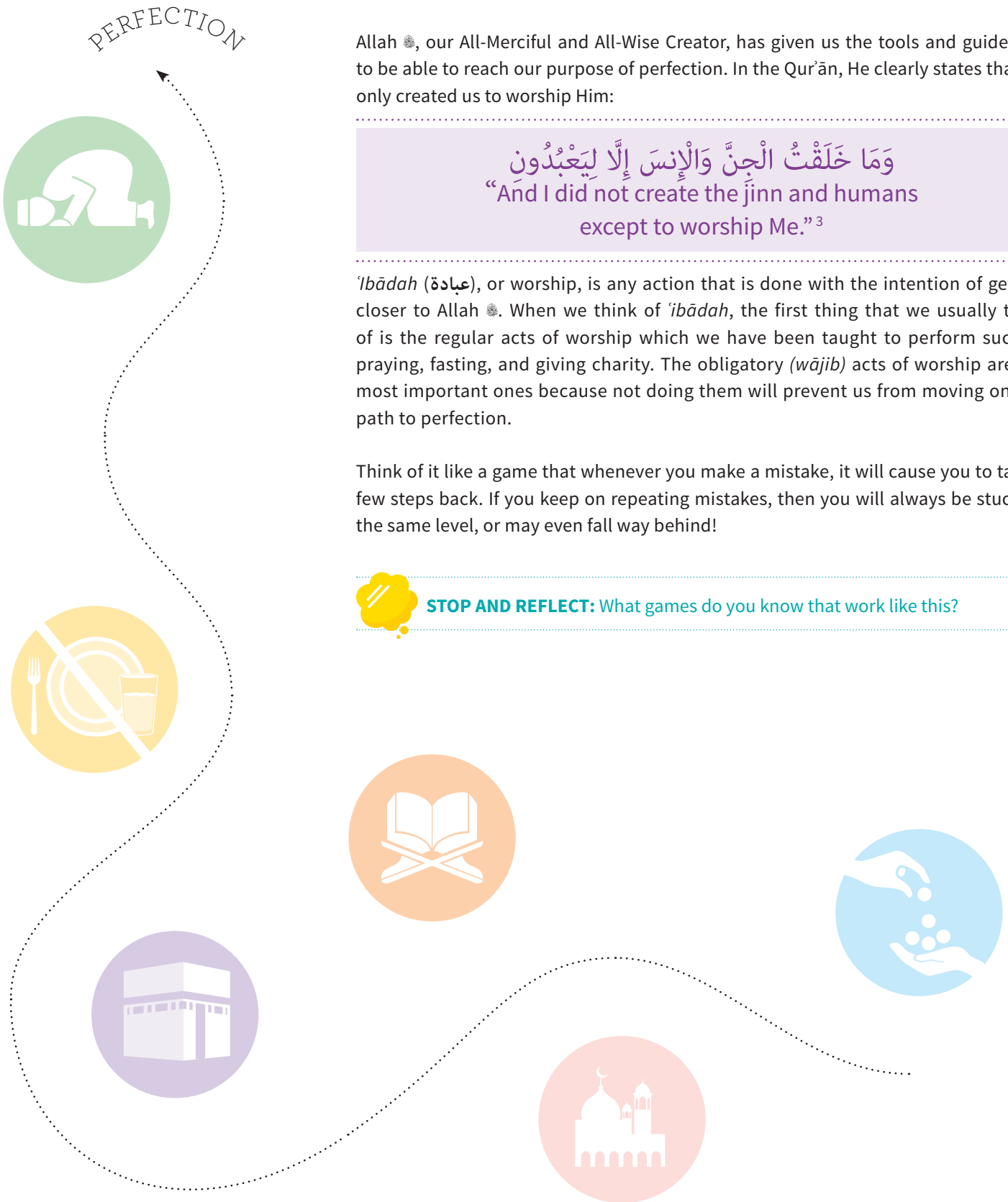
هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا

It is He [Allah] who created for you all that is in the earth.[2]

This verse *(āyah)* shows how Allah ﷻ made everything in this world at our service to help us reach our purpose. Human beings have a unique potential to reach perfection, and everything was created to help us reach that potential. For example, the best way for food and water to be used is to serve a believer. When we drink water for energy to be able to worship Allah ﷻ, this water is helping us serve our purpose. If we play sports to become healthier, this is serving our purpose.

1 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 14, P. 304.
2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 29.

WORSHIP (ʿIBĀDAH): A MEANS TO REACHING PERFECTION



Allah ﷻ, our All-Merciful and All-Wise Creator, has given us the tools and guidelines to be able to reach our purpose of perfection. In the Qurʾān, He clearly states that He only created us to worship Him:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I did not create the jinn and humans except to worship Me."[3]

ʿIbādah (عبادة), or worship, is any action that is done with the intention of getting closer to Allah ﷻ. When we think of *ʿibādah*, the first thing that we usually think of is the regular acts of worship which we have been taught to perform such as praying, fasting, and giving charity. The obligatory *(wājib)* acts of worship are the most important ones because not doing them will prevent us from moving on this path to perfection.

Think of it like a game that whenever you make a mistake, it will cause you to take a few steps back. If you keep on repeating mistakes, then you will always be stuck on the same level, or may even fall way behind!

STOP AND REFLECT: What games do you know that work like this?

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah adh-Dhāriyāt (51), Verse 56.

Activity 1.1f: Extension Activity

Design your own board game using the vocabulary and concepts in this lesson:

- ***ʿibādah*** (worship)
- ***qurb*** (closeness)
- ***hadaf*** (purpose)
- ***dīn*** (religion)

Complete the worksheet below as an outline for your board game.

1. What will be the starting point of your game?

2. What is the objective?

3. How about the destination or endpoint?

4. Are there any rewards or prizes along the way, or at the end?

5. How might opportunities or obstacles hinder or further your progress?

Different acts of worship that we have been obligated or recommended to perform play an important role in helping us achieve perfection, and are things that Allah ﷻ has encouraged us to do. Our first responsibility is to learn what is obligatory *(wājib)* and what is forbidden *(ḥāram)*, especially in our daily actions. For example, we need to learn how to offer our prayers *(ṣalāh)*, how to observe *ḥijāb*, how to fast, what kind of food is not allowed, etc.

It is very important to note that every action in our lives can be considered worship *(ʿibādah)*!

Anything that we do with the intention of getting closer to Allah ﷻ can become a form of *ʿibādah,* which can also help us attain many rewards in this world and the next.

Think about how important Allah ﷻ is supposed to be for us. He created us so He knows us best! If we are trying to please Him and become closer to Him, then all of our actions should align with what He wants.

For example, if we develop healthy eating and sleeping habits so that we have the strength to get closer to Allah ﷻ, this is a form of *ʿibādah*. Another form of *ʿibādah* is when we are kind and respectful to our family and friends—even during disagreements—to please Allah ﷻ. Even being conscious of what we look at, and who we surround ourselves with can be a form of *ʿibādah*. Usually, we think about having good intentions, but the more important question is: Do we have God-conscious intentions? In essence, these are more or less the same thing because everything that is truly good comes from what is good in Allah's eyes.

Activity 1.1g: Worship (ʿIbādah) in Our Daily Lives

DIRECTIONS: What are some more everyday examples of *ʿibādah* that you can think of? Look at the chart below and check mark all of the ones that you do regularly. Now, record one everyday form of *ʿibādah* that you would like to add to your daily routine.

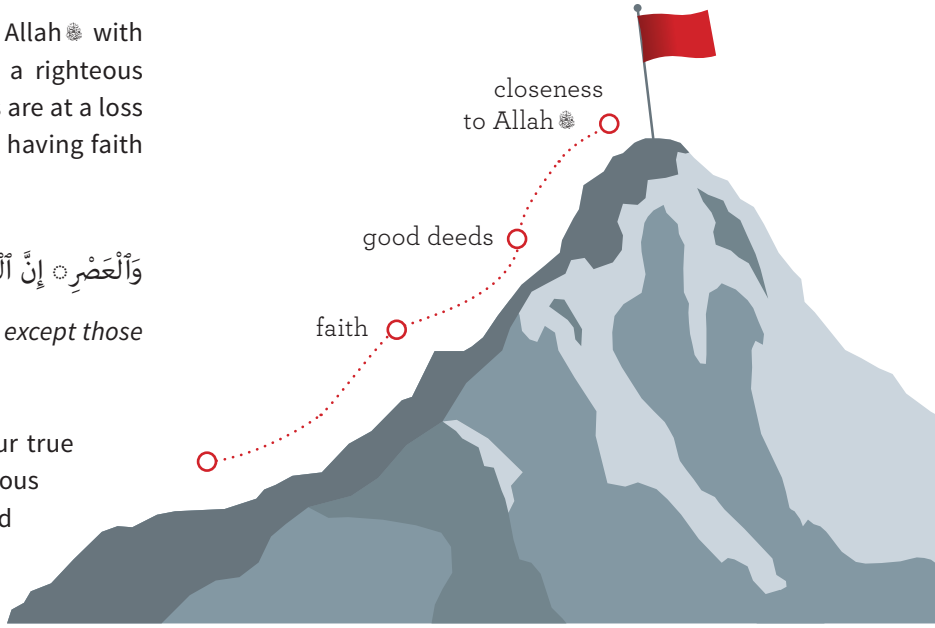
EVERYDAY EXAMPLES OF WORSHIP (ʿIBĀDAH)	✓
Healthy eating habits	
Sleeping early and doing good bedtime rituals	
Being kind to family and friends, even during disagreements	
Being conscious of what we look at, and who we surround ourselves with	

Performing *ʿibādah*—those actions commanded by Allah ﷻ with the intention of pleasing Him—is the definition of a righteous deed. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ states that human beings are at a loss except for those who perform righteous deeds while having faith in Him. In Sūrah al-ʿAṣr, Allah ﷻ says:

وَٱلْعَصْرِ ۝ إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ لَفِى خُسْرٍ ۝ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّـٰلِحَـٰتِ…

I swear by time! Certainly, human beings are at a loss, except those who have faith, and do righteous deeds…[4]

The only way for us to be successful and achieve our true purpose in life is by having faith and performing virtuous deeds. By doing this, we will slowly move closer toward Allah ﷻ!



4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-ʿAṣr (103), Verses 1-3.

Activity 1.1h: Exit Ticket/Summary Questions

1. Recall: What directions are given to us to reach our true purpose in life?

2. Explain how one's purpose in life relates to the closeness *(qurb)* to Allah?

3. Explain how we can make all of our daily actions be counted as worship *(ʿibādah)*?

1.2 Need for Religion

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

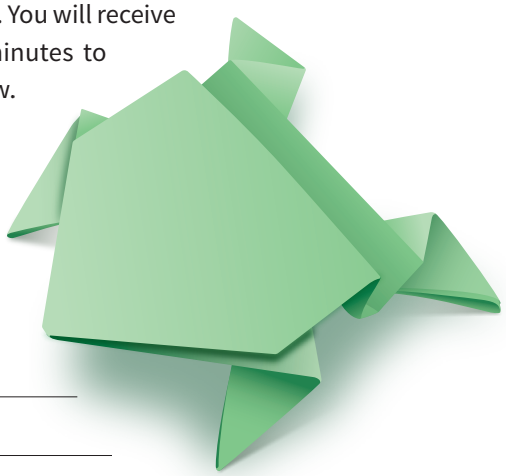
- Recognize that religion fulfills all of the needs of a human being.
- Learn about the origins and purpose of religion.
- Learn why every person needs to investigate for themselves in order to find a way of life.
- Learn the connection between our purpose and religion.
- Learn about the two guides: intellect *(ʿaql)* and innate nature *(fiṭrah),* and examine their roles in guiding us toward closeness with Allah ﷻ.
- Focus on how our internal and external guides help us find Allah ﷻ.
- Learn how our innate nature *(fiṭrah)* can become hidden or covered up.

ʿAQL: Intellect

FIṬRAH: Our innate God-seeking nature

Activity 1.2a: Pre-Reading Craft

Your job is to create an origami jumping frog. You will receive a piece of origami paper. You have five minutes to create the same frog that is pictured below. Then, answer the questions below:



1. Were you successful at creating the frog?

2. How easy or difficult was it to create the frog?

3. What would have made it easier for you to create the frog?

4. How do you think this activity relates to our need for religion?

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim is a young boy who woke up in a garden, locked in by glass walls. He was given a message that told him to search for his purpose in life.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM Part 2: The Glass Walls

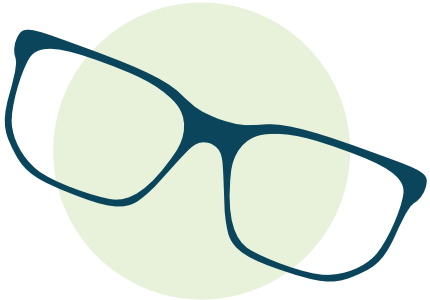
Ibrahim's head was throbbing after hitting the glass wall so many times. He pressed his face against the glass wall, looking longingly at the stream behind it. It was so close, yet so unattainable. He knew that he had to get there, but he was not sure how. *There has to be a way out*, he thought to himself, but he was too overwhelmed with all of the different things around him, and how little he understood them. He had tried several ways to get to the other side, but none of them worked.

He tried standing on a rock and climbing up a tree trying to throw himself over, but the glass walls were way too high. He tried walking around them, but the glass walls seemed to go on endlessly. Exasperated, he started to throw rocks at them, hoping that they would somehow shatter. But it seemed as if they were bulletproof because they did not shatter at all. Nothing seemed to work. *There has to be a way!* Ibrahim thought to himself. *It would be so much easier if I had clear instructions or someone to just show me the way!* He thought about the bookshelf that he had just built with his father the week before, and how they used instructions to help them along the way. He wished that this glass wall area had instructions too.

Looking through the glass wall, Ibrahim was shocked! He noticed an old man in the distance near the stream, holding a huge bottle of water. This man had gotten the water that Ibrahim needed desperately, so it was possible to get to the stream! If only the old man could show him the way, Ibrahim could be successful as well. *Maybe the old man has been sent to help me*, Ibrahim thought to himself.

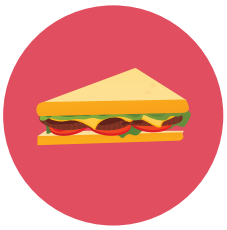
"Hey!" Ibrahim screamed, waving his arms, desperately trying to get the old man's attention. "I need your help to get some water!" The man did not look up at Ibrahim, despite the commotion that he was making. Ibrahim started to bang on the glass and continued to yell. The man was either hard of hearing, or the glass walls were soundproof, so the man simply could not hear him!

Ibrahim was growing desperate; he did not know which direction to go, so he started to run frantically along the glass wall, not really paying attention to where he was going. When he stopped to catch his breath, he saw a shiny wrapper partially buried in the ground. He started to dig for it, thinking that it may contain some food or water. After digging for a while, he saw that it was empty, and when he looked up he realized that he had completely lost sight of the old man. The stream now seemed to be even further away!



Ibrahim sighed and sat down on a rock, wiping away the beads of sweat that had formed on his forehead. He stared hopelessly at the grass in front of him. The grass looked so odd—parts of it were burned, and other parts were lush and green. *What is this place?* he thought. He looked again and suddenly realized that a message had been burned into the grass. It said: "Wear the glasses." He had been so involved with the wrapper that he had missed the message! The message confused him even more, but he wanted to get out of the glass enclosure. How would glasses help him? He did not really understand, but at least now he knew what to look for: glasses.

Activity 1.2b: Quick Write & Reflection



QUICK WRITE: In 60 seconds, make a list of games, activities, or events that would not be possible to engage in without a proper and/or thorough set of instructions.

REFLECTION: How does the same apply for things we do in our lives? What if we had no set rules or guidelines for them?

WHAT IS RELIGION?

All religions are composed of two main parts: beliefs and practices. In order to be a true follower of any religion, we must understand why we follow the religion that we do, and also follow certain guidelines that are laid out.

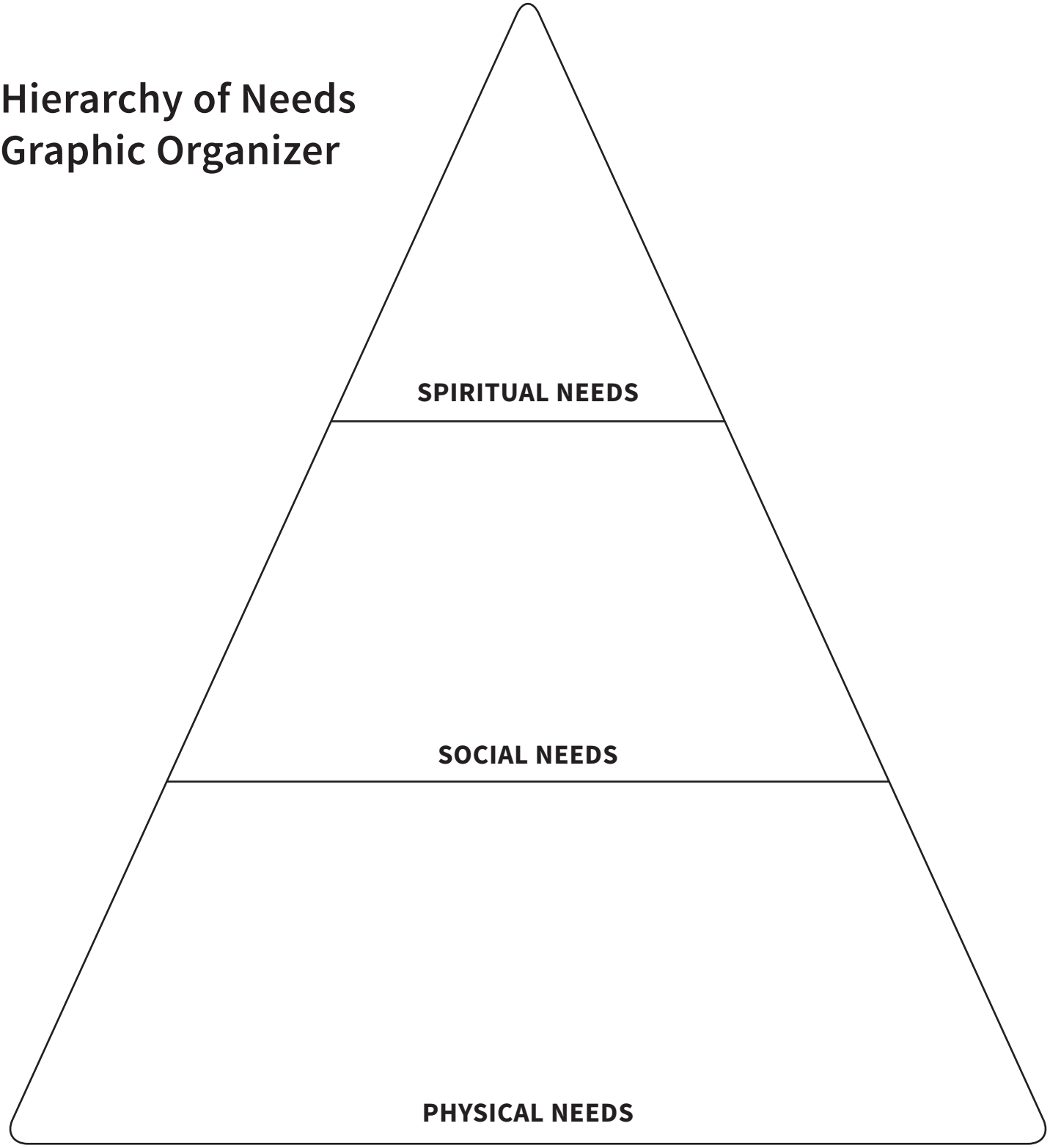
STOP AND REFLECT: What is the difference between beliefs and practices?

As humans, we have three types of needs: physical needs, social/emotional needs, and other higher/spiritual needs. Physical needs are those needs that are necessary for our survival, like food, water, and shelter. Social/emotional needs include our need to communicate with family and friends, the need to be cared for, and things that are essential for a society to function, like laws, leaders, and governments. Finally, higher or spiritual needs are those that our soul needs to thrive, like knowing our purpose in life, and having a meaningful way to live our lives. These spiritual needs are part of our consciousness and essence as human beings, and are what set us apart from animals.

Activity 1.2c: Fulfilling our Hierarchy of Needs

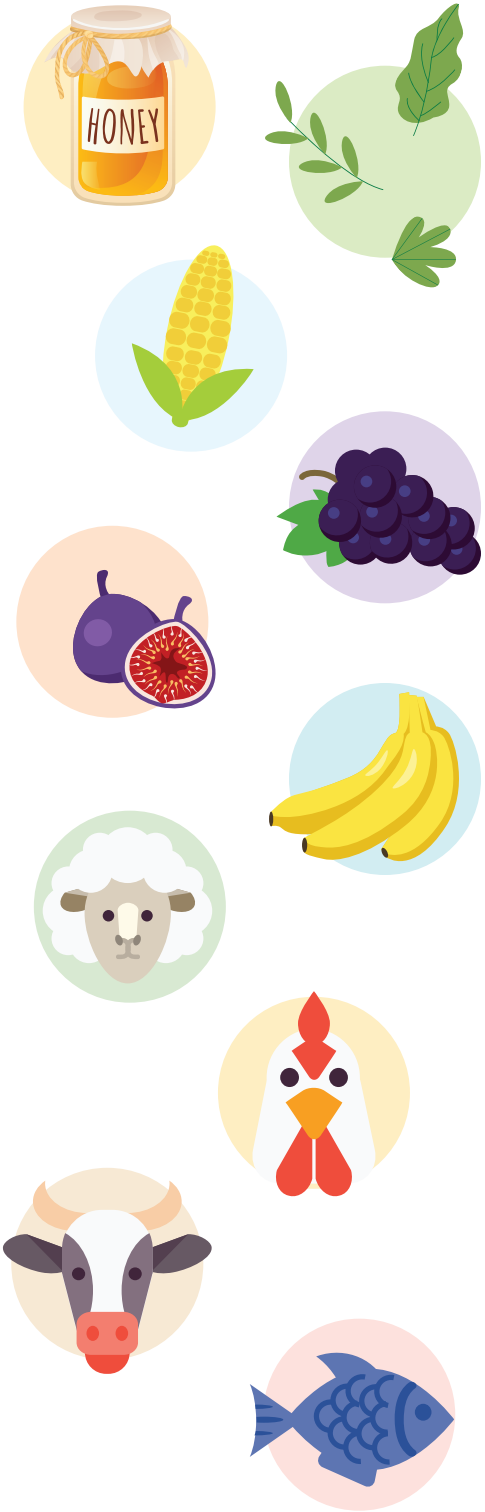
There is an abundance of guidance within the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* to help us best fulfill our various needs. Read through the selection of *āyāt* or *ḥadīth* listed on the following pages, and copy them into the graphic organizer under the coinciding tiers of human needs that each excerpt addresses; alternatively, you may place the excerpt number in the corresponding tier.

Hierarchy of Needs Graphic Organizer



Activity 1.2c: Fulfilling our Hierarchy of Needs (Continued)

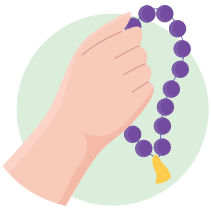
The following Qurʾānic verses, and *ḥadīth* relate to the three types of human needs: physical needs, social/emotional needs, and other higher/spiritual needs. Using the numbering system, place the excerpts into the related tier of the **Hierarchy of Needs Graphic Organizer** on the previous page:



From the Qurʾān:

1. Allah ﷻ recommended us to: "Eat what is lawful and good on the Earth." [1]
2. Some foods which are beneficial for our health: honey,[2] vegetables such as corn, herbs, and grains,[3 & 4] and fruits such as olives, dates, grapes, pomegranates,[5] and bananas.[6]
3. Allah ﷻ also recommends us to eat the meat of certain animals and their milk, as well as fresh fish and birds: "And He created cattle for you, wherein is warmth and (many) gains, and you eat thereof;" [7] and: "He has provided for them livestock (of the camel, etc.). So eat them and feed the miserable and the poor." [8]
4. References advocating physical activity can be inferred from the Qurʾānic verses and Prophetic traditions, which share the common theme of maintaining respect for the body: "Do not with your own hands throw yourself into ruin." [9]
5. "Prosperous is the one who purifies the soul, and failed is the one who soils it with sins (and impurity)." [10]
6. "But Allah has endeared to you faith, and has made it pleasing in your hearts; and He has made detestable to you disbelief, ungodliness, and disobedience." [11]
7. "And do not turn your face from people (in scorn and pride), and do not walk on the earth exultantly; indeed Allah does not love anyone proud and boastful." [12]
8. "It is not piety (righteous) that you turn your faces to the East or to the West. (True) piety is to have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets; and to give of one's wealth, in spite of love for it, to the relatives, the orphans, the needy, the traveller, those who ask (for help), and to free the slaves; (and those who) perform the prayers, and pay the alms. And those who fulfill their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant; and endure with fortitude (during) misfortune, hardship, and dangers. They are the ones who are true in their faith; and they are the God-fearing (and righteous ones)." [13]

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 168.
2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Naḥl (16), Verses 68-69.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ar-Raḥmān (55), Verse 12.
4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ʿAbasa (80), Verse 27.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6), Verses 99 and 141.
6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Wāqiʿah (56), Verse 29.
7 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Naḥl (16), Verse 5.
8 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥajj (22), Verse 28.
9 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 195.
10 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ash-Shams (91), Verses 9-10.
11 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (49), Verse 7.
12 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Luqmān (31), Verse 18.
13 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 177.



Examples from Ḥadīth:

9. In the following *ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ advises against overeating: "Do not indulge in overeating because it will quench the light of faith within your hearts." [14]

10. Another frequently cited *ḥadīth* recommends that a person should fill one-third of the stomach with food, one-third with water, and one-third should be left empty.

11. It has been narrated that the Prophet ﷺ and Imām ʿAlī ؑ would refrain from eating bread made from refined flour, rather they ate that which contained barley and bran.[15]

12. Imām ʿAlī ؑ has been reported as saying: "Do not let your stomach become a graveyard for animals." [16]

13. "Your body has a right over you;" and "A strong believer is better than a weak believer." [17]

14. Imām ʿAlī ؑ, in his historic directive addressed to Mālik al-Ashtar, told him: "(O Mālik) The good and the wicked must not be equal in your eyes, otherwise it will discourage the good from doing good, and encourage the wicked in their misconduct. Treat them in accordance with the kind of conduct that they have chosen for themself." [18]

15. Imām ʿAlī ؑ, Commander of the Faithful, draws our attention to a (certain) point with an interesting metaphor. He says: "Be like the honeybee, which always drinks the purest of things (i.e. the nectar) and yields the purest of things, and does not break any bough that it descends on." [19]

16. Imām ʿAlī ؑ said: "A person who does not appreciate the good, unmingled, and sincere intentions of one's friend will also not appreciate their services and acts of kindness." [20]

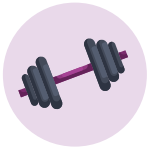
17. Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī ؑ said: "The best of your friends are those who forget your inadequacies, but never forget your kindness." [21]

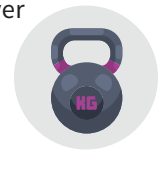
18. Imām ʿAlī ؑ refers to this kind of loss and deprivation in the following saying: "A person who does not give thanks for a favor (done to them) will not find anything except deprivation and disappointment." [22]

19. In the directive to Mālik al-Ashtar, Imām ʿAlī ؑ points out the significance and benefits of appreciation: "(O Mālik) Attention to major matters should not make you neglect minor and less important ones, for people benefit from your trivial services and acts of kindness in their own right, although they cannot do without your major services… Pay thorough attention to the demands and needs of the people. Compensate those who take pains and do worthy work. For the tribute paid to them for their work will give enthusiasm to the brave and serve as a constant source of their motivation. This practice will also help motivate conservative and timid people and draw them to the field of battle." [23]

20. Imām ʿAlī ؑ said: "In the beginning, obtain self-control through abstaining from sins and vices. Then it will be easier for you to habituate yourself in the obedience and service of Allah." [24]

21. Imām ʿAlī ؑ said: "Acquire control over yourself by abandoning (bad) habits and fighting your desires, so that they become subject to the power of your will." [25]





14 Nayshābūrī, Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak ʿalā aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Vol. 3, P. 81.
15 Iran English Radio. IRIB World Service [Internet]. Iran: Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Service; c2011. Analysis; Articles; *Islam Nutrition and Health* Part 10; Feb-Jun, 2011.
16 *Path of Light / Voie de la Lumière* [Internet]. Canada: Canadian Islamic Centre of Montreal; c2007. *Islam and the Vegetarian Diet* by Cyril Anderson.
17 Al Khayat MH. The Right Path to Health: Health Education through Religion; 9. *Health as a Human Right in Islam*. World Health Organisation Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, 2004, Pp. 11, 18, 21 [originally in *Ṣaḥīh Muslim*].
18 Nietzsche, Friedrich,*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Penguin Books, 1975), P. 206.
19 Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, P. 569.
20 *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, P. 672.
21 *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, P. 702.
22 *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, P. 672.
23 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol.2, P. 87.
24 *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, P. 508.
25 *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, P. 508.

ORIGIN OF RELIGION

Muslims believe that religion—and the worldview that comes with it—began with the very first human being: Prophet Ādam ﷺ. Throughout history, every Messenger sent by Allah ﷻ has explained the religion and worldview that human beings should have. It has been the same core message from the beginning of time, consisting of three main principles:

1. Belief in the One and Only God who created everything, and sustains everything in existence.
2. Belief in the Prophets and the message that they brought to us as a way of life.
3. Belief in the Hereafter as being our ultimate destination.

WHY SHOULD A PERSON INVESTIGATE RELIGION?

Some people may ask: "Why investigate religion at all?"

STORY CONNECTION: We see in the story of Ibrahim that he is constantly trying to look for answers because he is trapped and needs water. For him, the need to find a way to the water was very pressing. If he decided to ignore this need, or prioritize other things above it, then he may face fatal consequences. On the other hand, the pleasure that he would experience if he could get water is enough to make him continue to look for answers. Similarly, we are always searching for answers as human beings.

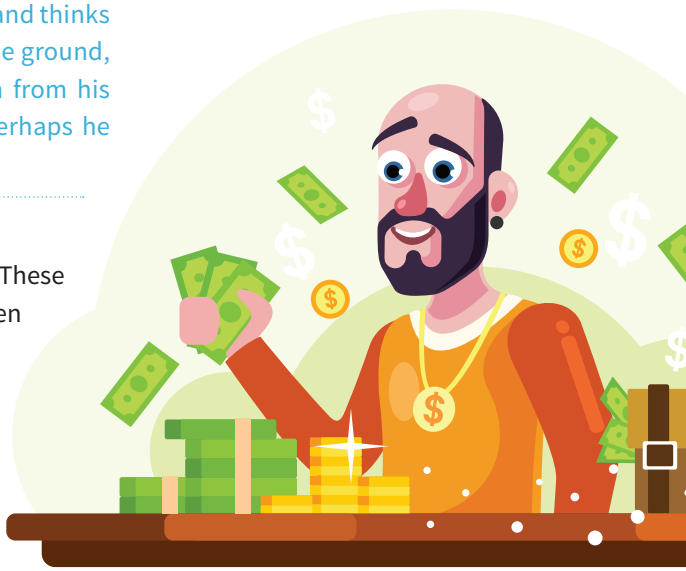
There are some simple reasons why all humans should look into religion. All creatures want to save themselves from even the possibility that they will be harmed. Imagine a very young child comes knocking on your door and tells you that there is a fire down the street, and if you do not leave your house and try to help the situation, then it will burn the entire neighborhood! How would you react?

STOP AND REFLECT: If this happened to you, would you go and investigate the fire, even if you do not know the child?

Now, imagine that someone you know comes to your door to warn you about a fire. Imagine that this person is very trustworthy and truthful. Everything else you know about them is good. You would likely be even more inclined to believe them.

Just like a fire in the neighborhood, we have been sent warnings about the Hereafter. Allah ﷻ sent us pious and trustworthy Prophets to warn us about the consequences of our actions, so at the very least, we need to look into their teachings and warnings. Although many people get distracted in this life and forget to look into the more important issues such as religion and faith, there are actually many benefits to believing in religion.

STORY CONNECTION: In the above story, Ibrahim finds a wrapper and thinks that it may contain something useful. But when he gets it out of the ground, he realizes that it is empty, and this only serves to distract him from his eventual goal. If he had paid more attention to his surroundings, then perhaps he could have avoided the distraction.



Oftentimes, people look to celebrities as examples of those living an ideal life. These famous individuals 'seem' to have it all: wealth, talent, popularity, and even the admiration of many people. Some misguided individuals even idolize celebrities; however, it is no secret that if you analyze them and their lives objectively, there is very little to envy.

STOP AND REFLECT: Do you think celebrities are happy with all of the money and fame that they have? Do you think they are completely satisfied with their lives?

We see that many celebrities and other people with wealth and fame are not satisfied, even if they have everything they could ever want in this world. The physical comforts and notoriety that they have do not lead to complete satisfaction, and often these individuals are actually the unhappiest. Rich and famous people sometimes have to deal with harsh rejections, depression, lack of privacy, and dysfunctional relationships with their loved ones. This could be because they do not realize that they have a higher purpose, and are mainly pursuing temporary pleasures such as fame and money.

Religion can connect people to their higher purpose, and guide them to a path that will provide success for them in this world and the hereafter. It will also help them to see beyond the superficial comforts and things of this world.

In the section below, we will analyze why we require religion to fulfill our spiritual needs, and how it can dictate the best ways to fulfill our other needs as well.

THE NEED FOR RELIGION

Religion is an all-encompassing tool that helps us fulfill our higher, spiritual needs; and it also shows us the best way to fulfill our physical and social needs.

As we established in the last lesson, we have the best of purposes which is to become as close as we can to Allah ﷻ through worshiping and serving Him.

STOP AND REFLECT: How can we serve Allah ﷻ? What should we do?

STORY CONNECTION: Think about Ibrahim in the story. He knows that he needs water to survive, and that there is something more going on—maybe even a higher purpose—but he does not know how to get there, or what to do. As he tries to figure things out and overcome the obstacles that he is facing, he realizes that he needs help and instructions to show him what to do.

Just like Ibrahim, we need instructions and guidelines in our life.

When trying to find these guidelines, we have three possible options:

1. **Following our own opinions and desires:** this option will lead us down the wrong path because we usually focus on our short-term desires, and ignore our long-term benefits. Also, we have very limited knowledge of the world.
2. **Following the opinions and ideas of other human beings who follow their own opinions and desires:** this option will also lead us down the wrong path because the people we decide to follow also have limited knowledge, and may be influenced by their own desires.
3. **Following the instructions provided by our Creator and Sustainer that are passed on to us through the Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ which also conform with our intellect**: this set of instructions comes to us in the form of the Divinely-sent religion of Islam which was taught by all of the Prophets ﷺ, perfected with the last of the Prophets ﷺ, and preserved through the 12 Imāms ﷺ.

The rest of this lesson will explore the inner guides that we have toward Islam.

OUR GUIDES: FIṬRAH (INNATE NATURE) AND ʿAQL (INTELLECT)

Fiṭrah (Innate Nature)

Once, a man came to Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ and asked him about how he may get to know Allah.

Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ asked the man if he ever had an experience where his ship was in danger and about to sink.

The man replied in the affirmative, so the Imām ﷺ asked him: "In that moment, did your heart feel a sense of a strong power, which made you feel like someone would help you?"

The man answered: "Yes!"

The Imām ﷺ continued: "This feeling of hope and power that overcomes people in times of danger and need, and the feeling of support and strength given to all, is the presence of Allah, the All-Powerful. He is the only One (who can help you) in those places, when there is no one else to save you. Thus, you must always be hopeful of Him. He is always there, and He is the One who provides safety and security for all of humanity. He is Allah, the All-Great." [26]

Human beings have been created in such a way that we know Allah, and desire to get closer to Him. At a very basic level, we also have been given intuition about what is right and what is wrong. This is called our ***fiṭrah,*** and is referred to in the Qurʾān as follows:

فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا…

(Adhere to) The fiṭrah (innate nature) of Allah upon which He created humankind…[27]

We do not need to be taught the knowledge of the *fiṭrah* because it is part of the way that we have been created. However, we do need to make sure that we do not get distracted away from this innate nature, and that the awareness of it grows deeper throughout our lives. This is why Allah ﷻ has blessed us with another internal guide known as the intellect (*ʿaql*).

ʿAql (Intellect)

The other internal guide which Allah ﷻ has blessed us with is our intellect and our ability to use reason and logic. When we observe the incredible precision and beauty in the world around us, our intellect immediately realizes that there must be a Wise and Merciful Creator who created this for our benefit. Allah says in the Qurʾān:

وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ آيَاتٌ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ۝

And (in) the variation of the night and the day, and (in) what Allah sends down of sustenance from the skies, then gives life thereby to the earth after its death, and (in) the changing of the winds, there are signs for a people who understand (use their intellect—ʿaql). [28]

Allah ﷻ has blessed us with these two internal guides: the ***ʿaql*** (**عقل**)—intellect; and the ***fiṭrah*** (**فطرة**)—our innate God-seeking nature.

Our *fiṭrah* leads us toward goodness, and our *ʿaql* helps us differentiate right from wrong, and increases the knowledge we have about good and bad. The combination of these two internal guides helps us in the sense that we will be able to have a good, healthy conscience, which will then assist us to make good choices.

Our *ʿaql* however is limited, and there are certain realities that we would not be able to reach on our own without Allah ﷻ sending us Prophets, Divinely-revealed Books such as the Qurʾān, and Imāms to explain what is best for us.

26 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *At-Tawḥīd*, P. 231.
27 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ar-Rūm (30), Verse 30.
28 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Jāthiyah (45), Verse 5.

NEED FOR GUIDANCE TO RELIGION

STOP AND REFLECT: If Allah ﷻ is All-Knowing and All-Merciful, would He leave us without directions in life?

Our *fiṭrah* can also help us to some degree to know intuitively what is right and what is wrong. But if we make bad choices then we corrupt our *fiṭrah*, and we can lose our ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

We cover up our *fiṭrah* when we commit sins. This is like Ibrahim's glass walls. We might not realize that there is a barrier, but it is there and it blocks us from reaching our destination. Our *fiṭrah* and *ʿaql* give us a general direction, but they do not spell out things for us clearly, or give us detailed instructions.

Outside societal influences can work against our *fiṭrah* and cause us to ignore our intellect. For this reason, when people want to be 'good' without following the guidelines of religion, they will not be able to reach their higher purpose and achieve closeness to Allah ﷻ.

Allah ﷻ is the One who created us with a certain purpose and gave us instructions—the religion of Islam—to get us to where we need to go. These instructions come to us through external guides, such as the Prophets and the Imāms. They received instructions from Allah ﷻ, then taught us the necessary guidelines for us to reach our purpose. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ

He [Allah] is the One who sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion. [29]

STORY CONNECTION: Think about Ibrahim in the story. He has his intellect, and he knows where he needs to go, but there are so many things he does not know. Without instructions, he is not clear about what he should do—except that he needs to rely on someone else to give him those instructions!

29 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Fatḥ (48), Verse 28.

Activity 1.2d: Distractions and Opportunities

There are many distractions in the world around us that cover up our innate nature (*fiṭrah)* that has been given to us by Allah ﷻ; likewise, there are many everyday opportunities that can help us reconnect with our innate nature *(fiṭrah)* and increase our love of Allah ﷻ and His religion. In the table below, list some examples of distractions or social influences which could cover your *fiṭrah,* as well as some measures you can take to reconnect with your *fiṭrah*.

THINGS THAT CAN COVER UP OUR INNATE NATURE (FIṬRAH)	THINGS THAT HELP US RECONNECT TO OUR INNATE NATURE (FIṬRAH)

CONCLUSION

Once we have understood our need for religion, we must strengthen our beliefs and practices through the instructions that Allah ﷻ has given us. If our purpose is to become closer to the All-Perfect and All-Just Creator, then only Allah ﷻ can tell us how to do this.

1.3 Islam: The Best Religion

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Review the origins and purpose of religion.
- Learn why every person needs to investigate in order to find a way of life.
- Learn why Islam is unchanged and timeless.
- Learn why Islam is the most advanced religion.
- Learn about how Islam is a complete way of life.

Activity 1.3a: Pre-Reading Brainstorm

1. With a partner, create a list of things (needs, hopes, and lifestyles) that you might have in common with a person who lived 1000 years ago. What are some differences?

2. Do people need guidance beyond those things that all human beings have in common?

3. Is it possible to address every person's needs across time and place?

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim is a young man who suddenly woke up in a garden surrounded by glass walls. He saw various messages giving him clues, and now he is trying to find a pair of glasses—as this was the most recent clue that he was mysteriously informed about.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM
Part 3: A New Challenge

It was almost mid-day, and the sun's heat was overpowering. Ibrahim continued his search for the pair of glasses that the message burned into the grass had told him to find. These glasses had to be the key to get him to the other side, to the water that he so desperately needed in order to sustain him. He thought to himself: *Who is helping me, and sending me all of these messages? Who put me here?* This world was such a mystery to him, but he knew that there had to be answers. There had to be a way to get to the other side, and to get some water. He knew what he needed to do, but he just did not know **how** to find these glasses. Ibrahim looked up at the sky and started to wonder about this world. *I want to know You better, the One who created all of this. Why is all of this here?* Ibrahim thought.

He continued to look up at the sky and watched the clouds rolling by. There were a few birds flying above him. One of them flew down and perched itself onto the tree next to him, looking at him. Ibrahim felt strange.

The bird started pecking the branch that it was sitting on. The branches on this tree were an odd shape. They folded into circles and kind of looked like…glasses? Ibrahim carefully looked again. The branches were twisted into various circles and did resemble glasses, but there was something else **in** the tree! Ibrahim looked closer and realized that there were at least a dozen pairs of glasses on the branches of the tree! He had finally found them, and wanted to yell with excitement!

Ibrahim stood up and started to climb the tree, grabbing onto every pair of glasses he could find, but realized that they all looked different. Some of them were small, others had really foggy lenses, and there were even some that came in different colors. *But if they are all different, how do I know which ones are the right glasses?* he wondered. Gathering all of them, he climbed down the tree, and began trying them on. The first pair was too small. The next pair had frames, but no lenses. Ibrahim was getting flustered–none of these were right. Ibrahim thought to himself that there has to be a pair of glasses that fit, have lenses, and are intact so that he can actually use them. The glasses that would lead him to the right way could not be these broken ones with missing pieces!

Next, Ibrahim picked up a pair of bright pink glasses. They were a bit chipped, but still in wearable condition. When he put them on, he was amazed. The garden was glittering with magic. He was mesmerized with the garden's beauty. For nearly an hour, he just looked at the majestic garden through this pair of pink glasses.

As he looked toward the sky, he remembered the bird that guided him toward the glasses, and how he was looking for a way out. He lost track of what he was supposed to be doing! Even though these glasses were really fascinating, it was not helping him get to the water source on the other side of the glass. He had even forgotten that he was thirsty. He took off the pink pair of glasses and sighed, looking down at his pile of misfit spectacles.

The next pair in the pile was light blue; the handles were askew but they had lenses and fit. He put them on and looked around. The garden looked the same, but there was something else he noticed. He could now see something faint on the glass walls that he was desperate to escape from. With the rest of the glasses in his hand, he walked to the closest glass wall and stared at it. There was some type of writing on the wall, but it was blurry. The lenses on this pair were not strong enough to help him.

The next pair he tried on was black, and looked to be ordinary, but when he put them on, his vision tripled. He could see very clearly that there was some type of message written on the glass wall like on a computer screen, but he could not read it too clearly. He placed this pair in the discard pile as well.

The second last pair of glasses looked better, less scuffed than the other ones before it. As soon as he wore them, he saw the glass screen come alive. *Ibrahim, after you complete these tests, you will get to the other side, which is the real world. So make everything count. Press 'Enter' to continue.* Ibrahim looked everywhere for the Enter button, but there was no such button anywhere to be seen. A lightbulb went off in his mind. With this pair of glasses, Ibrahim could not see the Enter button. The garden had also become blurry; it was as if the glasses were ignoring the garden and the world around him.

He decided to try on the last pair of glasses which seemed to be strong and sturdy, with a beautiful brown frame. They looked like what someone wise would wear. *Wasn't the old man I saw earlier wearing a pair of glasses just like these?* He put them on, and could not believe how perfect they were! He could see the garden, the sky, **and** the glass screen. More importantly, a red 'Enter' button was clearly visible beneath the text he had read earlier. Grinning from ear to ear, Ibrahim looked at the screen and confidently hit the 'Enter' button on the glass screen. All of a sudden, he heard the words: *Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm* echo throughout the garden.

INTRODUCTION

STOP AND REFLECT: If you were asked to write a test, who would you want to go over the study material with? The person who designed the test and will be grading it, or your classmates? Explain your choice.

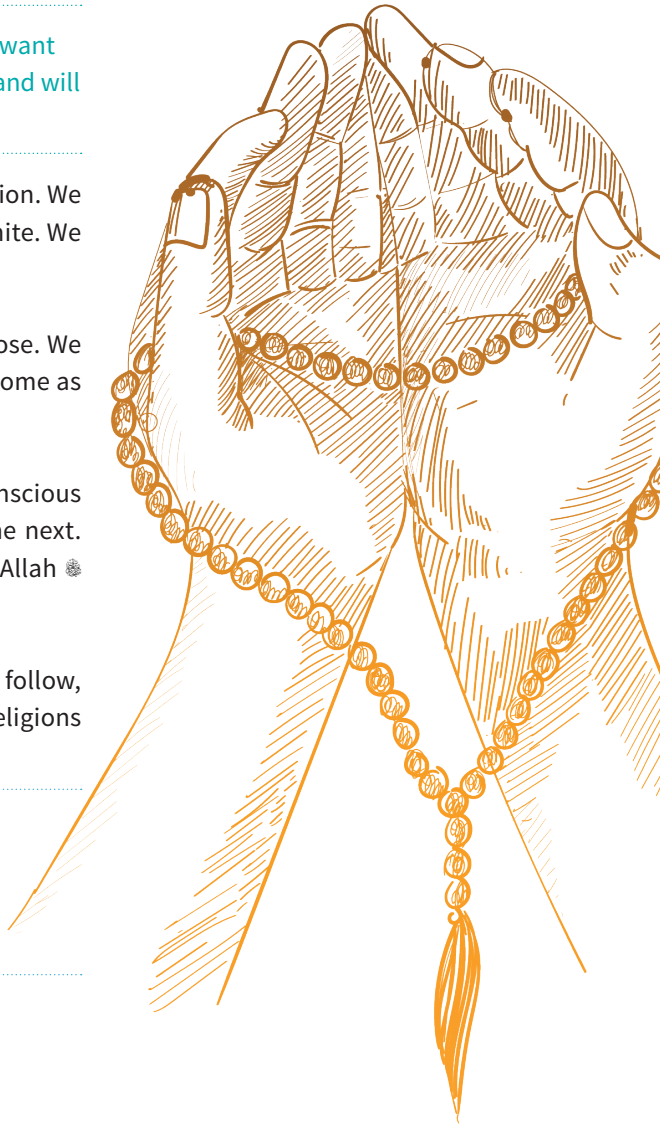
In our previous lessons, we talked about why, as human beings, we need religion. We established that there must be a Creator, and He must be All-Perfect and Infinite. We also know that there must only be One God–Allah.

We learned that we have been created in the best way with the highest purpose. We have the potential to become the best of creatures, and our purpose is to become as close to Allah ﷻ *(qurb)* as we can, by worshiping Him *(ʿibādah)*.

By making choices in line with what Allah ﷻ wants, and having God-conscious intentions, we are setting ourselves up to be successful in this world and the next. In order to fulfill this purpose, we concluded that we need guidelines from Allah ﷻ Himself, which we call the religion of Islam.

Although there are many ways of life, and so-called 'religions' that people may follow, there is **only one** true religion, and that religion is Islam. The other so-called religions do not meet the criteria for the true religion.

STORY CONNECTION: In the story, Ibrahim comes across several different glasses, and he is not sure which pair of glasses he needs to help him get to the other side. Some of the glasses he found could not help him reach his goal. Only one pair of glasses did this.

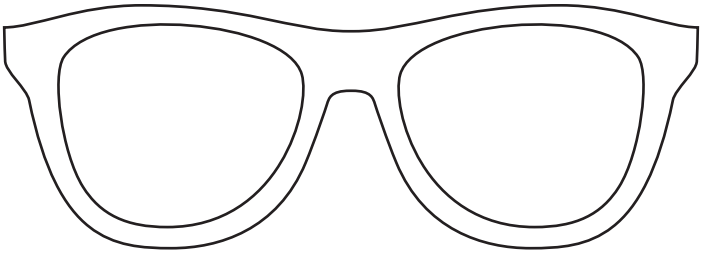


Activity 1.3b: Varying Perspectives

Examine the different pairs of glasses that Ibrahim found with their different characteristics, and decide what religion or way of life they could represent. Color code the glasses according to the story description, and add other identifying features.

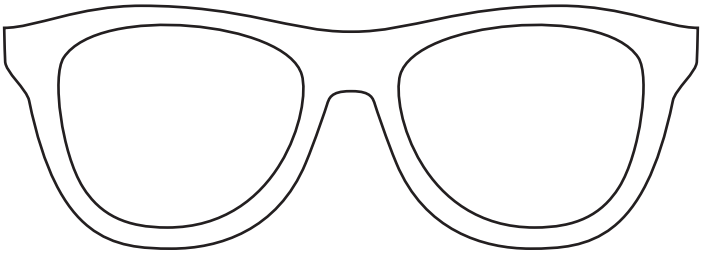
GLASSES #1

A religion or way of life these glasses represent:



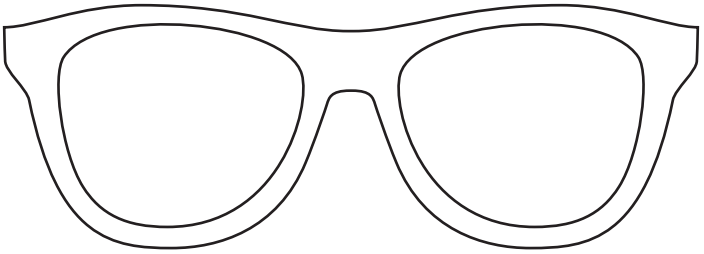
GLASSES #2

A religion or way of life these glasses represent:



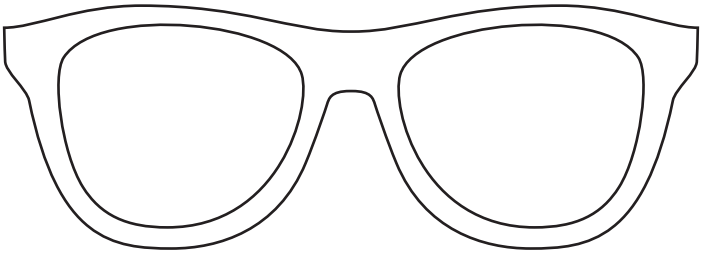
GLASSES #3

A religion or way of life these glasses represent:



GLASSES #4

A religion or way of life these glasses represent:



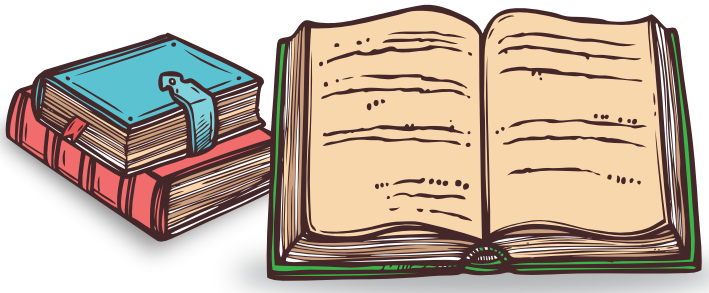
Some religions believe that there are multiple gods. However, our logic and innate nature *(fiṭrah)* have proven that there is **only one** God. Some other religions may believe in one God, but their idea of God limits God; and as we have learned, this also goes against logic and innate nature.

Some religions do not have Prophets or a Divine Book, and we have talked about the need for a Merciful Creator to send guides to His creations. Other religions may believe in some sort of guides, but these guides are not impeccable role models. The **only** religion whose teachings are consistent with logic, intellect, and innate nature is the religion of Islam. In this lesson, we will look at some of the ways in which Islam has a unique and unmatched set of teachings.

ISLAM IS UNCHANGED AND TIMELESS

Since we believe in an All-Perfect Creator, Allah, we should believe that the religion He sent down for us to follow is perfect in every way possible. The directions and guidance that He gave us, and our core beliefs, are not limited to time, nor do they change under different circumstances.

STOP AND REFLECT: If human beings were responsible for changing or developing the core beliefs of religion, then why would we need a Divinely-sent religion in the first place? Explain this. (This does not mean the rules related to religion, for example specific conditions and applicable rules of how we practice certain things in Islam like rules relating to our jurisprudence, as we know these may change with time and place, and that is why we have scholars to research and teach us these things when the need arises).



It is undisputed, even by people who are not Muslims, that the Bible of Christianity and the Torah of Judaism have been altered over time. The Bible was written many years after Prophet ʿĪsā ﷺ was raised to heaven. It might have some remnants of what the disciples remembered from the Injīl, the book of Prophet ʿĪsā ﷺ, but it is imperfect. This is why there are so many different versions of the Bible today.

The Torah is also changed from the book that Prophet Mūsā ﷺ was given, although it might have some things still from the original Tawrāh in it. These books were altered before the time of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. In contrast, Allah says in the Noble Qurʾān that He Himself will protect this Divine Book from being altered in any way; thus the Qurʾān will remain as is, and be the true guidance sent for people until the end of time.

The Christians and Jews had been told that there will be another Prophet who will come, and they had learned some of the characteristics of this final Prophet. One of the companions of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, Salmān al-Muḥammadī (previously known as Salmān al-Farsī), had heard about the characteristics of the Noble Prophet ﷺ from Christian monks.

As Muslims, we are unanimous on the text of the Qurʾān and what is contained therein. Even though it was revealed over 1,400 years ago, it is still intact and will always remain the exact same. There is only one version of it, and that is the original version. Even when archaeologists found some of the oldest versions of the Qurʾān from close to the Prophet's time, the words and text were always identical. This is why we see even today that there is only one version of the Qurʾān in existence. Any copy of the Qurʾān you pick up from anywhere in the world has exactly the same words and letters in the same order. No other book in history has been preserved as such, that too over a thousand years later!

Activity 1.3c: Group Game and Discussion

DIRECTIONS: In groups of 4+, play two rounds of broken telephone, and see if your group can keep a given message intact for even a brief period of time. Try increasing the complexity of the message in each round.

Once you have completed a round, answer the following questions independently.

1. What happened to the message the more it was shared?

2. Was it harder to keep the message intact the longer it became?

3. How does this help explain the miracle of the Qurʾān being unchanged?

ISLAM IS THE MOST ADVANCED RELIGION

We know that Allah ﷻ sent other Prophets whose followers became the groups that we know as Christians and Jews. If we look carefully at these other religions, we can see that at a very basic level, they are actually quite similar. Their core teachings are that people should believe in one God, that there will be a Day of Judgment, that there are Prophets which God sent for the guidance of humanity, and that people should have good manners and etiquettes *(akhlāq)*. So what is it that sets Islam apart from these other religions?

STORY CONNECTION: These religions are like the last few pairs of glasses that Ibrahim found–they all seemed to work to some degree enabling Ibrahim to see that the glass screen was actually a computer touch screen, but they were not the final answer.

STOP AND REFLECT: What made the last pair of glasses perfect?

Over time, Allah ﷻ sent more Prophets with the same message: that of Monotheism *(Tawḥīd)*. The laws of religion were taught more as time progressed, until we reached the laws revealed through the Qurʾān and the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

After all of the other Prophets came and told their tribes and followers about the advent of the last Prophet, Allah ﷻ, in His wisdom, decided to send Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as the final Messenger. He brought the final and most complete religion. These laws were preserved with the Imāms ﷺ after him, and will remain as such until the end of time. The Imām of our time, Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ, knows all of the perfected laws of Islam, but since we do not have access to him at this time, we look to our scholars *(ʿulamāʾ)* for guidance and direction.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "My example among the (other) Prophets is like the example of a house which has been built complete and beautiful, except for one final brick that is missing. Everyone who comes into the house says: 'What a beautiful house, except for this one brick that is missing.'" The Prophet ﷺ continued: "I am like that missing brick—Prophethood comes to an end and completion through me." [1]

There are various proofs for this, including the fact that other Prophets ﷺ described Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and how he would be the last of them; the miracle of the Qurʾān itself; and what Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ told us about his own Prophethood.

Another aspect of Islam being the most advanced religion is that Islam teaches us through impeccable role models. Other religions attribute major sins to their guides, and even to the Prophets. In contrast, as Shīʾah Muslims, we believe in perfect role models like the 124,000 Prophets ﷺ, and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ of the final Messenger ﷺ. They are sinless and impeccable human beings. This teaching is unique to Shīʾah Islam. The great role models that Allah presents for us set a high and noble standard for us to reach. Islam's role models give us great examples to follow in our everyday lives, and for any situation that we may face.

1 Al-Ḥajjāj, Muslim ibn, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Vol. 4, P. 1791..

Another unique aspect of the religion of Islam is that it encourages its followers to think and use logic, and it does not contradict science. One should think, reflect, and use the intellect to reach the truth. At the same time, Islam is against blind faith. The teachings of Islam never contradict science. There are a lot of scientific facts that the Qurʾān presented over 1,400 years ago which science later confirmed. For example, the Qurʾān speaks about the Earth shrinking, as well as the universe as a whole expanding. Both of these statements were recently confirmed by science.

STOP AND REFLECT: Think of an individual that you might consider as your role model. What characteristics do they embody? Do they have any flaws? What is the benefit of having flawless role models?

ISLAM: A COMPLETE WAY OF LIFE

Islam is the most perfect religion because it contains guidelines for a complete lifestyle, not just certain aspects of life. This distinguishes it from other religions because of its holistic nature, and the fact that it guides us in our day-to-day lives, even in the most minute things. It includes everything from our physical to spiritual health. It has guidelines for every area of our lives—from us as individuals, to our families, to society as a whole. It also teaches us many things about life after death, and what we need to do to prepare ourselves for the Hereafter. These guidelines serve to establish our worldview.

This benefits us greatly and helps us live a pure life. It has given us instructions so we are able to perform these actions in the best possible way to reach our purpose.

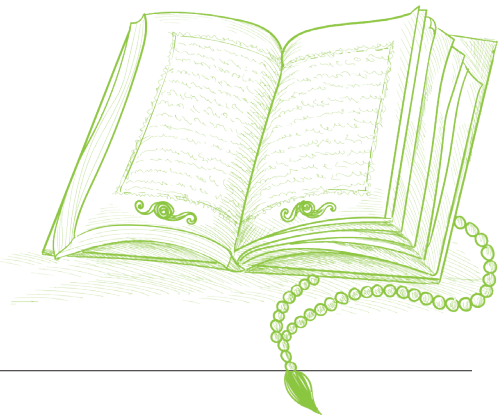
In one of the last verses to be revealed in the Noble Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says that He perfected our religion and completed His blessings upon us. Then, He says: "I have approved for you Islam as the (true) religion." [2] Allah ﷻ also makes it clear in the Qurʾān that there is (only) one religion and that is Islam.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللَّهِ الإِسلامُ
Indeed, the religion with Allah is Islam." [3]

STORY CONNECTION: Think about the last pair of glasses that Ibrahim found in the story: they showed him the garden's reality, and they also showed him the glass touch-screen. Thus, Ibrahim will be better able to work toward his purpose when he wears those glasses.

2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Māʾidah (5), Verse 3.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Āl ʿImrān (3), Verse 19.

Activity 1.3d: Qurʾānic Connection



What do the following verses of the Qurʾān tell us about Islam and its characteristics?

لَّا يَأْتِيهِ ٱلْبَـٰطِلُ مِنۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِۦ ۖ تَنزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

Falsehood cannot approach it (the Qurʾān), from before it (in the future) or behind it (in the past), [it is a revelation gradually] sent down from (the) All-Wise, (the) Praiseworthy. [4]

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَـٰفِظُونَ

Certainly, We have sent down the Reminder (the Qurʾān), and certainly, We will preserve it (be its Guardian).[5]

ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessings upon you, and I have approved for you Islam as the (true) religion.[6]

4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (41), Verse 42.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15), Verse 9.
6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Māʾidah (5), Verse 3.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that we need religion, which is a set of guidelines and instructions for us to reach our purpose. As we know, this purpose is to become closer to Allah ﷻ by serving Him, and to become as perfect as we can. We need a religion and directions that come from Allah ﷻ, because as our Creator, He knows what is best for us. When we look at the various teachings and ways of life available, we can see that Islam is the only true religion and the only way to live, because it is from Allah ﷻ.

CHAPTER 2

Attributes of Allah ﷻ

2.1 Allah's Attributes: Part One

2.2 Allah's Attributes: Part Two

2.3 Monotheism (Tawḥīd)

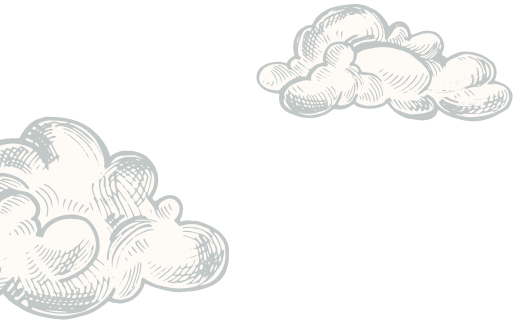
2.4 Justice of Allah ﷻ

2.1 Allah's Attributes: Part One

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Reflect on Allah's creations, and how they are reflective of His Divine Attributes.
- Explore the ways in which Allah's Attributes help us to achieve closeness to Him.
- Familiarize ourselves with four of Allah's core Attributes: *al-ʿAlīm, al-Qadīr, ar-Raḥmān,* and *al-Ḥakīm*.
- Understand how Allah ﷻ is *al-ʿAlīm* (the All-Knowing) and *al-Qadīr* (the All-Powerful).



Activity 2.1a: Pre-Reading

If you had to make a list of characteristics or attributes that define you and/or your identity for someone else, what would you include? Share your list with a partner. Were some of the characteristics that your partner chose for themself also applicable to you as well?

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim is a young man who suddenly woke up in a garden surrounded by glass walls. He found various messages hidden for him throughout the garden, giving him clues as to how to exit the enclosure. In the last lesson, Ibrahim found a pair of glasses that would help him discover more about this mysterious garden.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM
Part 4: Who is the Creator?

Ibrahim's face was almost as bright as the sun; he was grinning from ear to ear and could not believe that he was finally getting closer to the water on the other side. Wearing his guiding glasses, he was now able to see the glass touch-screen with perfect vision. He hit "Enter" and watched as the letters on the screen rearranged themselves. After a few seconds, he read the message on the screen. It said: "Do you want to know the Creator better, get to the water, and do what He knows is best for you?"

Ibrahim smiled. Of course, he wanted to know the Creator of this wonderful world, and the One who created him! Of course, he wanted to get some water, especially since he was so thirsty! He immediately hit "Yes"—excited to see what would happen next. He was expecting some kind of explanation or video to appear, but instead the following words appeared on the screen:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِن دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ ۝

And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and whatever creatures He has scattered in them; and He has full Power to gather them whenever He wishes.[1]

This world has been created in such a way that it will tell you about your Creator. Look at everything in this garden, and figure out four characteristics of its Creator. Look at the sky, the earth, the plants, the trees, and the animals within the garden. Enter these four characteristics in the following boxes and you will pass the first stage.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ash-Shūrā (42), Verse 29.

Ibrahim groaned. He wanted to know more about the Creator and get to the water! But then again, it was kind of fun to have a puzzle to figure out. There must be a reason why the Creator made him, and gave him instructions to follow. As soon as he was about to walk away from the screen, he saw something else appear on it. A picture of a backpack appeared on the screen, and next to it there was a "Print" button. He grinned—this awesome computer also had a 3D printer!

A small hole opened in the glass screen, and out shot a backpack. *Great!* Ibrahim thought to himself. Opening it up, he found some supplies, including a notepad and a pen. *Now I can write down my discoveries and keep track of the Attributes of the Creator*, he thought. There were a few other supplies in it, including a shovel and an empty water bottle.

Ibrahim sat down on the grass and thought about everything that had happened so far. How did the Creator know that his most urgent question was to figure out what he was supposed to do, to find his purpose? What did He want Ibrahim to do? The Creator must have known what Ibrahim was thinking about, as well as his deepest needs and desires. The Lord had even included a water bottle in the backpack, showing that He knew Ibrahim was thirsty and wanted water. Clearly, the Creator knew everything about him—and about the universe! Ibrahim opened his notebook and wrote: "*Al-ʿAlīm*: The All-Knowledgeable." All of a sudden, he heard the noise of running water. He looked at the water bottle and his eyes widened. There was water filling up in the bottle! It only filled about a quarter of the bottle, but Ibrahim opened it and drank it eagerly. It felt so good. *Alḥamdulillāh*, he thought to himself. *Thank You for being a Creator who knows me and my deepest needs!* It looks like he had figured out at least one characteristic!

He got up and started to walk around. There were so many wonderful things in this garden that Ibrahim did not know what to focus on. A huge bee buzzed past his ear, and Ibrahim's gaze followed it as it headed toward a bunch of flowers. He watched the honey bee intently, observing how it jumped from flower to flower, taking the pollen. He had learned about bees in school, and how they are a vital part of the ecosystem. They are on the verge of becoming extinct, and without them, chaos would ensue for the environment. Even though they are so small, they play a huge role and have a purpose in the grand scheme of things. Not only that, but he also learned that bees can do amazing things despite being so small. For example, they always take the fastest route when traveling between flowers, they can compute angles, and they are the only animal known to be able to calculate the fastest way to get to different places![2]

What a skilled and capable Creator! He is so Powerful that He can do absolutely anything—even make the smallest of creatures so fascinating! Knowing that the Creator knew everything that was happening to him, and also that He was so Powerful, gave Ibrahim a sense of comfort. He smiled, opened his notebook, and wrote "Al-Qadīr: The All-Powerful." Ibrahim was no longer scared or worried—he knew that he was in good hands. The Creator was watching him, and was aware of everything that was happening. As he reflected, he wrote down another quality of Allah ﷻ—"Al-Khabīr: The All-Aware."

The water bottle spontaneously filled again partway, and Ibrahim happily drank the water. He knew that this water was just a little reflection of the abundant water that was in the fountain which was waiting for him on the other side.

2 Reilly, Lucas, *13 Fascinating Facts about Bees,* May 20, 2021, Mental Floss, (Retrieved November 13, 2022 from https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/53691/13-fascinating-facts-about-bees).

INTRODUCTION

UṢŪL AD-DĪN:
the Roots of Religion

ʿAQL (عقل):
reason

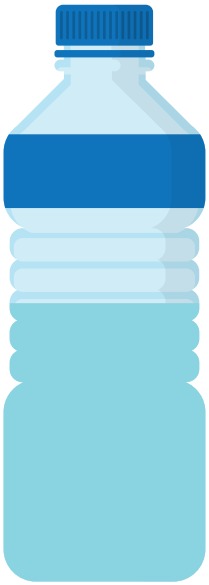
FIṬRAH (فطرة):
innate God-seeking nature

TAWḤĪD (توحيد):
the Oneness of Allah ﷻ

In the previous chapter, we learned that all of us have a divine purpose in this world. In order to reach this purpose, we need religion to assist, guide, and instruct us. We also concluded that the most perfect and only religion that will truly help us reach this purpose is Islam. The foundation of Islam is rooted in the ***Uṣūl ad-Dīn*** (**اصول الدين**)—the Roots of Religion. The *Uṣūl ad-Dīn* are the core beliefs of Islam, and it is important that we believe in these on our own. We cannot believe in them simply because our parents or someone else tells us to. We must logically arrive at the conclusion that these beliefs are true by using our own intellect. Other things may help us along the way, like the guidance of the Immaculate ones (the *Maʿṣūmīn* ﷺ), but it is something that we have to conclude for ourselves. Allah ﷻ has created us with ***ʿaql*** (**عقل**)—reason, and ***fiṭrah*** (**فطرة**)—innate God-seeking nature, which can help us find and accept the truth.

When it comes to the Uṣūl ad-Dīn, there are five of them: the first of which is ***Tawḥīd*** (**توحيد**)—the Oneness of Allah ﷻ. Absolutely nothing and no one is worthy of worship except for Allah ﷻ, the One, and we must submit to Him completely. But knowing that there is only one God is simply not enough to understand Tawḥīd. We must also try to get closer to Him by following His religion and learning more about Him.

In the above story, Ibrahim is on a journey to find out about the Creator. If someone asked you what you know about Allah ﷻ, your Creator, what would you say?



STOP AND REFLECT: Think about your closest friend. Why are you friends with them? What are their best characteristics? Describe them in the best way that you can by using a few words.

Now, imagine that you knew nothing about them. Could you be best friends with them if you did not know anything about them? Of course not! It is only after you get to know someone, learn about their traits, and spend time with them that you can build a real connection with them. When you get to know your friend and see how kind they are to you, you develop a unique connection with them and want to become even closer.

In the same way, if we truly see how much Allah ﷻ has done for us, and recognize all of the kind things that He continues to do for us, we will want to love and recognize Him more, and we will want to obey and worship Him to get that love and closeness. In the story, we see how Ibrahim is so desperate to find the water that he knows he needs. 'Water' in this case represents getting to know Allah ﷻ and becoming closer to Him. Ibrahim saw how Allah ﷻ was so kind to Him in the story, and how the more he gets to know Him, the closer he feels to Him.

STOP AND REFLECT: Is there someone in your life that you feel very close to and admire, such as one of your parents, a teacher, or a relative? How would you want this person to feel about you in return? What are some things that you consciously do to please and/or impress them?

If we learn more about Allah ﷻ and His Attributes, then we can become closer to Him and build a special connection with Him. Obeying Him, and through this, getting closer to Him, is a part of our life's very purpose! In the story, the more Ibrahim discovers about Allah's characteristics, the more water he gets in his bottle to drink. Knowing Allah ﷻ is like getting sustenance for our souls, and this in turn helps us live a meaningful life. But one may ask: How can we get to know Allah ﷻ when we cannot see or sense Him with our five senses?

STOP AND REFLECT: Besides Allah, there are several other concepts or things that most people believe in and accept the existence of, despite not being able to see or sense them with their five senses. Can you think of some examples?

ATTRIBUTE:
a quality that is a part of someone

ĀYĀT (آيات):
signs Allah ﷻ gives to help us learn about Him.

GETTING TO KNOW ALLAH ﷻ

When you described your friends earlier, what words did you use? Certain adjectives were probably used to describe them such as kind, funny, intelligent, fun to be around, etc. These descriptive words are called characteristics or attributes. An **attribute** is a quality that is a part of someone. If we want to get to know someone, we can learn about their attributes or characteristics. This will give us a better idea of who they are. Similarly, we can try to get to know Allah ﷻ and understand Him better by learning about His Attributes.

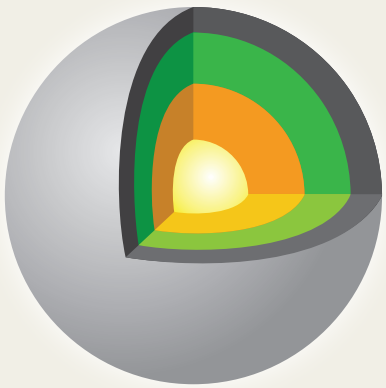
If we look at the world around us, Allah ﷻ has given us many signs which help us learn about Him. In Arabic, these signs are called ***āyāt*** (آيات). In the story, Ibrahim is trying to figure out some of Allah's most basic characteristics by observing the garden and the things that Allah ﷻ has created. We can do this, too! If we reflect and think about the things that Allah ﷻ has created in the world, we can see that each thing and the way it is made reflects one or more of the Attributes of Allah ﷻ.

The other way that Allah ﷻ shows us His Attributes is through the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, and *duʿās* that have been taught to us by the Prophet ﷺ and his Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. Thinking about these qualities can help us get to know Allah ﷻ better, become closer to Him, and worship Him as He deserves to be worshiped!

Activity 2.1b: Allah's Creations and Attributes

In the table below, come up with a list of a few of Allah's magnificent creations. Then, think about an Attribute of Allah ﷻ that this creation reflects.

Allah's Magnificent Creation	Allah's Attribute(s) that this Creation Reflects
A Fruit Tree	The Provider



ALLAH'S CORE ATTRIBUTES

Allah ﷻ has 99 famous and perfect Names, which are called ***al-Asmāʾ al-Ḥusnā*** (الأسماء الحسنى). However, His description cannot be limited to any number. In *Duʿāʾ al-Jawshan al-Kabīr,* which we usually recite in the nights of Qadr in the month of Ramaḍān, we call upon Allah ﷻ by 1,000 of His Attributes! Even though there are many ways to describe Allah ﷻ, He has some core Attributes or Characteristics. His other Attributes are an extension of these core Attributes.

Here we will learn about four of Allah's core Characteristics that are the building blocks in understanding Allah ﷻ and His Perfection. If we are able to understand these four Attributes properly, then we will be able to better understand how He always helps us, and has our best interests in mind. These four core Attributes that we will go over are: *al-ʿAlīm, al-Qadīr, ar-Raḥmān, and al-Ḥakīm.*

AL-ʿALĪM
the All-Knowing

The first core Attribute of Allah ﷻ that we will go over is that He is *al-ʿĀlīm* (العليم), which means All-Knowing or All-Knowledgeable. Allah ﷻ has Knowledge of every single thing in the universe and beyond. In the story, Ibrahim realizes that the Creator—Allah ﷻ—knows a lot about him, without Ibrahim ever saying anything out loud. There is not a single thing that Allah ﷻ does not know. His Knowledge is different from anyone else's, and it is not limited in any way whatsoever. We have bodies, and we can sense certain things with our five senses. We might know some things, but our knowledge is always limited.

For instance, how much do we know about the people passing by us on the street? By looking at them, we might know what they look like or what their voices sound like—but we cannot read their minds, nor do we know what will happen to them in the future. But Allah ﷻ does not have any limitations at all. He sees our actions and knows our thoughts. He knows everything that happened in the past, what is going on in the present, and what will occur in the future! In the above story, the Creator knows exactly what Ibrahim is seeking and gives him what he needs. From this, Ibrahim understands that his Creator is All-Knowing! When we stand to pray, we should remember that Allah ﷻ knows exactly what we need, what we are thinking about, and what our inner intentions are.

How would realizing and understanding that Allah ﷻ knows everything change how you live your life? Imagine if you found out that your parents or teacher knows exactly what you are thinking—all the time! Would you be more careful and cautious about the things that you think? Allah ﷻ knows what we are thinking all of the time, and He is always aware of everything that we are doing. We should try to remember this, and the fact that we are never alone—Allah ﷻ is constantly with us! Even if we are trying to hide what we are thinking, He still knows it! In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says:

Whether you hide what is in your hearts or disclose it, Allah knows it. And He knows whatever there is in the heavens and whatever there is in the earth; and Allah has Power over all things.[3]

AL-QADĪR
the All-Powerful

After figuring out that Allah ﷻ knows everything, Ibrahim figured out how Powerful his Creator is by observing the fascinating creatures in the garden, like the honey bee! When we say that Allah ﷻ is *al-Qadīr* (القدير), the All-Powerful, this means that He has unlimited Power and Ability. Allah's Power extends to everything, and He can do absolutely anything. In the story, Ibrahim realized how Powerful Allah ﷻ is by looking at the smallest of creations. He knew that the Creator must be All-Powerful if He created something so complex. Knowing that Allah ﷻ is All-Powerful, we also realize that He is capable of doing anything that He wants, and helping us in any situation.

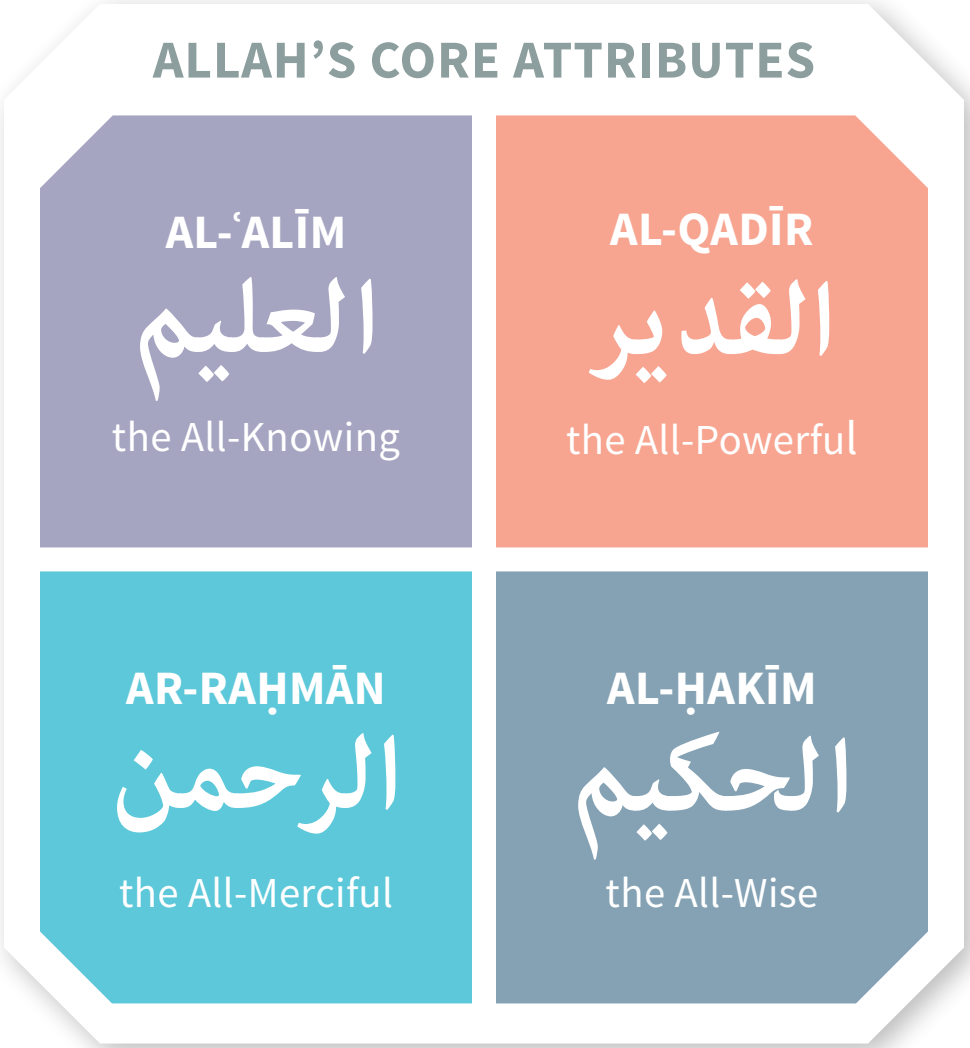
When a person gets power, sometimes they abuse that power for unjust reasons. However, Allah ﷻ is the **only** One who is All-Powerful and All-Just. All Power comes from Him. In combination with His Mercy and Wisdom, His Power is actually a source of comfort for us. There is nothing that is too difficult for Allah ﷻ to do, and if we have Allah ﷻ on our side in any troubling situation, then who else or what else do we need? Ibrahim realized how comforting it is to have this type of Creator watching over him: not only did Allah ﷻ know that he was stuck, but He was also capable of getting him out of his difficulty! This thought made Ibrahim feel very happy and completely at ease.

Like Ibrahim, we must also understand and accept the fact that Allah ﷻ is All-Knowing and All-Powerful. But then why does it seem like He is not always helping us when we need it? Why did the Creator not immediately help Ibrahim escape the glass walls and get some water? What do you think the reason behind this could be?

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Āl ʿImrān (3), Verse 29.

KEY POINTS

- It is important for us to understand the *Uṣūl ad-Dīn* (the Roots and Foundations of Islam) with our intellect *(ʿaql).*
- The first of the *Uṣūl ad-Dīn* is *Tawḥīd,* which means Monotheism: the Oneness of Allah ﷻ.
- Even though we can never know Allah ﷻ completely, we can learn about Him and His characteristics in a limited way by studying His signs, and looking at how He describes Himself.
- Allah ﷻ has certain core Attributes, four of which are: *al-ʿAlīm* (the All-Knowing); *al-Qadīr* (the All-Powerful); *ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful); and *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise).



Activity 2.1c: Review Questions

What do the following verses or traditions tell you in regards to learning about Allah ﷻ and His characteristics?

1. Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ؑ said: "The best worship is thinking continuously about Allah and His Power."[4]

2. Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān: "And with Him are the treasures of the unseen; no one knows them except Him. He knows whatever is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it; and there is no grain in the darkness of the earth; nor anything fresh or withered but that it is in a manifest Book."[5]

3. Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān: "Nothing is like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing."[6]

4 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 68, P. 321.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6), Verse 59.
6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ash-Shūrā (42), Verse 11.

Activity 2.1d: Oral Narrative Interview Project

As we have learned, Allah ﷻ has many Attributes. People can often recall stories in their own lives when they witnessed a particular Attribute (or Attributes) of Allah ﷻ very clearly. Pick a couple of community members or relatives to interview, and ask them about a time when some Attribute of Allah ﷻ became apparent in their lives. They can choose any Attribute of Allah ﷻ that you have learned in this lesson **(except *al-ʿAlīm* because an example has been provided)**. After you compile their narratives, present their stories in an essay format. Your essay should include an analysis of how the experience(s) of the person interviewed exemplify a particular Attribute. Use the rubric below to guide your essay construction.

	1 **Ineffective**	**2** **Somewhat Effective**	**3** **Considerably Effective**	**4** **Highly Effective**
Grammar	There are 5 or more grammatical mistakes.	There are 3-5 grammatical mistakes.	There are 1-2 grammatical mistakes.	There are no grammatical mistakes in the poster/script.
Focus and Details	The topic and main ideas are not clear.	Main idea is somewhat clear, but lacks supporting evidence.	The main idea is very clear however, supporting evidence and details are lacking.	There is a clear and focused main idea, supported by ample detail and evidence.
Voice/Intent	Author's voice/intent of writing is not apparent.	Author's voice/intent is somewhat apparent, but leaves the audience with many questions.	Author's voice is strong with a clear purpose, but still leaves the audience with some questions.	Author's voice and knowledge on the topic is strong and fully addresses all of the questions of the audience.
Accuracy	Content presented is not accurate or compelling.	Content presented contains much misinformation and lacks quality.	Content presented is mostly accurate, but still does not demonstrate quality work.	Content presented is extremely compelling and accurate.
Teacher's Comments				

Below is a completed example of a narrative for you.

Attribute (in Arabic): *Al-ʿAlīm*	**Meaning (in English):** Allah is the All- Knowledgeable

NARRATIVE OF A COMMUNITY MEMBER, RELATIVE, OR FRIEND

Name of person interviewed: My mother, Narjis.

Their Narrative:

One day, I had a very important interview that I needed to be at. After the *Fajr* prayer, I prepared for the interview, prepared our family's meals, and got in my car to leave. I left an extra 45 minutes earlier after calculating traffic time and all. I began to do the dhikr (remembrance) of Allah ﷻ in the car. All of a sudden, my car started to feel funny and I heard a loud "POP!" Oh no, I realized that I had a flat tire. I pulled to the side of the road and called someone to help me fix the tire. By the time it got fixed, there was a lot of traffic, and I had to take side roads to get to the interview. I was about 10 minutes late for the interview, but alhamdulillah I still got the job. That evening, while watching the news, I saw that there was a FATAL car accident a few blocks ahead of where my car had a flat tire. I realized that by giving me a flat tire—Allah ﷻ in His Infinite Knowledge—saved me from being involved in that accident. He is truly *al-ʿAlīm*.

Create the following template for yourself on a lined piece of paper:

Attribute (in Arabic):	**Meaning (in English):**

NARRATIVE OF A COMMUNITY MEMBER, RELATIVE, OR FRIEND

Name of person interviewed:

Their Narrative:

2.2 Allah's Attributes: Part Two

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Attempt to understand how Allah's four core Attributes help us recognize how He is our Lord *(Rabb)*, which will then help us to get closer to Him, and reach our true purpose in life.
- Explore how Allah ﷻ is *ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful); and *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise).
- Reflect how sometimes Allah ﷻ helps us by giving us what we need, not necessarily what we want. This helps us to grow.
- Recognize that one of Allah's qualities is that He nurtures us—He is our *Rabb*.

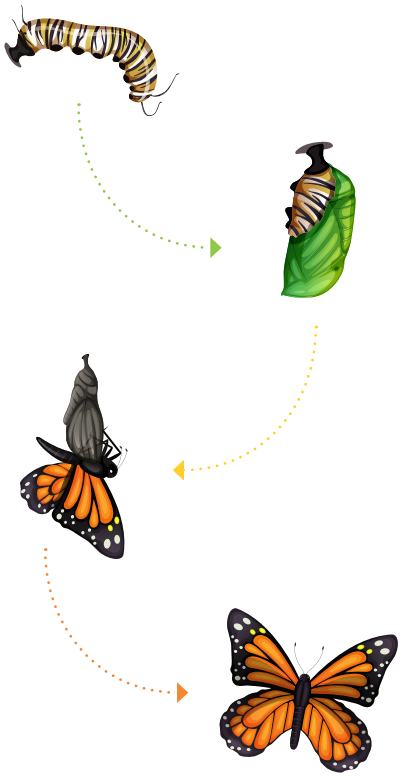
STORY RECAP: Ibrahim is a young man who suddenly woke up in a garden surrounded by glass walls. He found various messages laid out for him, giving him clues for exiting the enclosure. In the last lesson, Ibrahim started looking for clues to learn more about the Creator.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM

Part 5: Carried through Mercy

The sun was beginning to set, and even though Ibrahim had not gotten to the water on the other side of the glass wall, he felt comforted, and even happy, as he was learning more about His Creator. It was satisfying to understand a little bit about his Creator by observing the beautiful garden and all of its wonderful creatures. He was tired—but a good kind of tired—the way he felt after a good game of soccer.

Even though he drank the water that had spontaneously appeared in his water bottle, he wanted the water from the fountain on the other side even more than before. He now understood that getting there might take some time, but he was ready to be patient, trusting that the Creator knew best. Ibrahim had written two characteristics down in his notebook: *al-ʿAlīm* (the All-Knowing); and *al-Qadīr* (the All-Powerful). He had two qualities left to explore.



Deep in thought, he sat at the bottom of the tree with the glasses on, and looked at the majestic world around him. Everything had a perfect balance. He watched the birds fly to their nests in the tree, their wings fluttering at their side. He thought to himself: *How did they teach themselves to fly?* As he was wondering about this, a few of the birds brought some small twigs to help complete the rest of their nest. *Glory be to the Creator!* Ibrahim said out loud. It was incredible how birds could be the architects of such intricate structures just by using their own beaks. As he stared at the birds, he noticed a little cocoon hanging off of one of the tree branches.

Caterpillars that turned into butterflies were always a bit of a mystery for him. How could they just wrap themselves up like that? How did they not suffocate themselves? How did they know that something better was waiting for them, thus knowingly putting themselves through such hardship? Were they really sure that there was something better ahead? The cocoon slowly began to crack open, and Ibrahim was mesmerized, watching it split open more and more.

The curious little creature unfolded its wings and stretched them out, and then flew away in all of its beautiful glory. It was as if the butterfly was hinting to Ibrahim that something wonderful was awaiting him as well. The Creator was so Merciful, providing ease to all of the creatures, even when things seemed hopeless. Every animal had its place, a home, and food to eat. Everything they needed was provided for them in

this beautiful garden. They had to work to get it, but it was all there, as if it had been perfectly set up for them. *Not as if it had been set up*, Ibrahim thought to himself, *it was already set up by the Creator, perfectly for each creature!* The Creator was not only the All-Knowing and the All-Powerful, but He was even All-Merciful and clearly loved all of His creations.

All of a sudden, Ibrahim noticed a little creature shuffling through the trees. It was bigger than a bird, but smaller than a bear. It was a tree kangaroo! He watched in awe as the tree kangaroo climbed up and down the tree, using its strong claws to grab onto the bark. *Wow*, Ibrahim gasped. *Not only did every creature have what it needed, but they were even perfectly designed to carry out the tasks that they needed to do as well*. Tree kangaroos had the perfect type of claws to help them move around in the trees, and climb up the trees with speed. The Creator must be both All-Wise and All-Merciful.

Ibrahim quickly opened up his notebook and wrote down the other two characteristics that He had just observed: *ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful); and *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise). The self-filling water bottle filled halfway, and he gulped down the refreshing drink, excited to see what the next steps would bring him. Knowing all of these things about the Creator was beautiful. Ibrahim felt like he was finally getting to know Allah on a deeper level. He was actually glad that things were not just shown to him in one of those quick informational videos, because even though this was difficult, he understood the Creator on a much deeper level than he did before. He could never forget these things that he learned, and he would hold on to these in his heart for the rest of his life.

The birds fixing the nest above his head caught his eyes again, and he saw one of the baby birds fall flat on its face as it tried to fly from the nest. *Oh no!* Ibrahim cried, as he anxiously watched the baby bird slowly get back on its feet. Ibrahim watched it try again—this time it fell more gracefully to the ground, almost as if it was flying—but not really. The mother bird watched it try again and again, and Ibrahim smiled as the baby bird's skill rapidly grew. *That was real love,* he thought to himself. *Even though he was sure that the mother bird wanted to help her child, she knew that the only way the baby bird would learn was if she guided it, but let the baby do it by itself and learn the hard way.* He continued contemplating: *This was kind of like what the Creator did with me. He was training and teaching me in the best way possible. The Creator of everything is Allah ﷻ, our Lord and Nurturer. Alḥamdulillāhi Rabbil ʿālamīn—All praise belongs to Allah ﷻ, the Lord of the worlds!*

In the previous lesson, Ibrahim learned about two core characteristics of Allah ﷻ, including that He is *al-ʿAlīm* (the All-Knowing); and *al-Qadīr* (the All-Powerful). As he continued his search, he learned two more core Attributes.

Activity 2.2a: Nature Reflection

Ibrahim is given the opportunity to reflect on some of the marvels of nature which clearly show that a very intelligent and thoughtful Creator is behind their creation. Are there any marvels of nature that you are familiar with? Share something eye-catching that you have witnessed in nature with a partner, and describe the features of this creation that are fascinating or complex.

AR-RAḤMĀN
the All-Merciful

Allah ﷻ chose to introduce Himself most prominently with characteristics like *ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful); and *ar-Raḥīm* (the All-Compassionate). Every Sūrah in the Noble Qurʾān except for one, Sūrah at-Tawbah, begins with "Bismillahir Raḥmānir Raḥīm"—which means: "(I begin) In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate." Therefore, this small phrase which we are recommended to recite before we start anything mentions Allah's never-ending Mercy twice. In fact, in Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, which we recite at least ten times a day (twice in each prayer), Allah's Mercy is mentioned four times! In the Qurʾān, *ar-Raḥmān* comes 122 times, and *ar-Raḥīm* comes 226 times. These are two characteristics that are mentioned the most in the Qurʾān, which shows us how these Attributes of Allah ﷻ are the most important ones that can help us understand Him better.

Sometimes, when things are not going the way we want them to, we think that Allah ﷻ does not love us, or that He does not want to help us. In the story, Ibrahim was getting tired and thirsty as he traversed the garden. He knew that Allah ﷻ could help him and solve everything at any moment, but He did not do that. At the end of this part of the story, Ibrahim realized that Allah ﷻ was actually helping him understand the Creator better by letting him figure things out slowly, instead of just giving him fast answers. This is true love. The Noble Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* mention that Allah ﷻ truly loves us, which is why He created us and wants us to be successful. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says: "My Mercy encompasses everything."[1] This means that there is not a single creature which does not receive Allah's Mercy.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (7), Verse 156.

Activity 2.2b: Scenarios

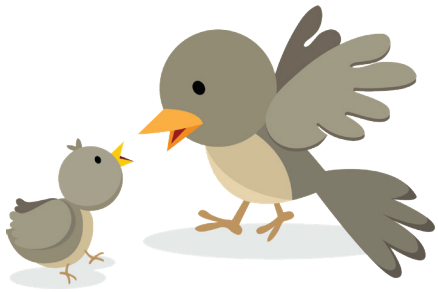
In the following scenarios, which teacher is the truly kind and loving one? What helped you make your decision?

Sarah had put in a lot of time and effort writing her English essay. Unfortunately, when she got her assignment back, she saw that her teacher had marked up her essay with so many red marks and comments that the entire paper seemed to be covered in neat scribbles. Her heart sank. She is going to have to stay up tonight making all of these changes that her teacher suggested.

In another school, Ali submitted his English essay to his teacher, an assignment that he had quickly completed the night before. He was extremely pleased to see that his teacher returned it to him with a neatly written 'A' in red ink at the top of the page. He stuck the assignment in his backpack so that he can throw it into the recycling bin once he gets home.

Discuss your decision with a partner.

In the story above, Ibrahim observed the little bird family, and how the mother bird showed some tough love (though not too tough) in order to teach the baby bird how to fly. This is also true of our own mothers. Imagine if your younger brother or sister tried to touch a hot stove or oven. What would your mother do? She would pull him or her away immediately. When she does this, how will the baby react? They will most likely start screaming and crying, and might even get angry at their mother for not letting them do what they wanted to do. However, because we are grown up a little, we know that the mother is only doing what is best for her child, even if they may not like it at that very moment. Sometimes, we act like this with Allah ﷻ. He wants us to avoid certain things that are bad for us, but we become upset and angry with Him. Eventually, we realize and see how everything that Allah ﷻ does, and whatever He commands us to do or refrain from, is actually for our own good. At the end of his discoveries, Ibrahim realizes that the hardships he went through were actually very beneficial for him.



Activity 2.2c: Discussion

Take 2-3 minutes and think of a time when your mom or dad did not allow you to do something that you wanted to do. Initially you were very upset, but later you realized that they only did this for your own good, and it helped you gain inner strength (i.e., it strengthened your spiritual muscles).

Discuss and share your experience with your classmates. Were your experiences similar? Take notes about your experience, and be prepared to share how you gained strength from this event.

> *"When Allah ﷻ loves a servant, He tests them with difficulties."*
>
> – The Noble Prophet ﷺ

Just like our parents love us and want to see us achieve our goals, but have to set certain limitations and guidelines, similarly Allah ﷻ loves us as well. In fact, He loves us more than our own parents ever could. Since Allah ﷻ truly loves us, He sends tests and opportunities to help us reach our ultimate purpose. The Prophet ﷺ has said: "When Allah loves a servant, He tests them with difficulties."[2] What this means is that Allah ﷻ gives us various difficulties and obstacles in our lives so that we are able to build and strengthen our spiritual muscles, and these muscles will help us reach our ultimate purpose, which is becoming closer to Allah ﷻ.

2 Muḥaddith Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, Vol. 2, P. 427.

The final core characteristic of Allah ﷻ that we will look into is that He is *al-Ḥakīm*, the All-Wise. In the story, Ibrahim figured out that Allah ﷻ must be All-Wise when he saw the intricate details which Allah ﷻ created in various creations, helping them to live their lives effectively. When we look at something for the first time, we may not understand the wisdom behind that certain thing in this world. When Ibrahim first saw the tree kangaroo, he probably did not think about how it was created with claws that were perfect to help it climb up the trees. However, after observing it and watching it, he realized how precise and wise Allah ﷻ is to have created it so carefully.

When we think about how Allah's Knowledge is so perfect and encompasses everything, and moreover that He only wants what is best for us, then the natural conclusion is that He is the All-Wise. He takes every factor into consideration, and knows every possibility with its pros and cons, and He always chooses the best way for us—keeping in mind the whole picture. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says:

It is He who forms you in the wombs (of your mother) in the way that He wants. There is no god (or deity worthy of worship) except Him, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." [3]

Everything that Allah ﷻ, the All-Wise, has told us to do is in order for us to be successful in this world and the Hereafter. He created us, knows us, and loves us!

ALLAH ﷻ AND ME

When Ibrahim learned about Allah's Attributes as he searched for them in the glass garden, he understood and was content with the challenges that he was facing because he knew that they were for his own good. How did learning something very basic about these Attributes of Allah ﷻ help him piece things together? Let us retrace his steps so that we too can understand Allah ﷻ better by looking at His characteristics.

First, Ibrahim learned that Allah ﷻ is *al-ʿAlīm* (the All-Knowledgeable). Allah ﷻ knows how we can get closer to Him, and become perfect more than anyone or anything else. He knows what will lead to our success in this world and the hereafter. He also knows the best path that can get us there. Allah ﷻ is *al-Qadīr* (the All-Powerful), thus He has the ability to guide us to this straight path, and He is All-Capable. He is also *ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful). He loves everyone, and is extremely kind to all of His creations. Finally, He is *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise), so whatever He does for us and to us is in our best interest, and helps us get closer to Him. Once Ibrahim learned something about these Attributes, he realized how Allah ﷻ had been trying to help him understand His Greatness all along. The journey that he had to take with all of its challenges was a way to help him grow and train him—not to hurt or harm him as such! When Ibrahim realized this, he said: "*Alḥamdulillāhi Rabbil ʿālamīn*"—

> "All Praise belongs to Allah,
> Lord (Nurturer) of the worlds."

Every day, at least ten times a day, we also say this phrase, which is in Sūrah al-Fātiḥah. The word *Rabb* means a Lord who is nurturing. These four characteristics of Allah ﷻ clearly show us that He is indeed our *Rabb*—the One who is in charge of everything, takes care of all things, and nurtures all creations so that they can grow in the best way possible. When we truly think about these characteristics, it can change our relationship with Him. In the story, the way that Ibrahim looked at Allah ﷻ completely transformed when he understood these Attributes.

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Āl ʿImrān (3), Verse 6.

Activity 2.2d: Allah ﷻ, the Nurturer

As we grow and develop, we realize that our needs grow and develop with us. If we were to explore each stage of our lives from infancy to old age, what do you think our needs would be from stage to stage? Identify the needs for each stage of life, and then brainstorm some of the ways that you know Allah ﷻ nurtures our growth during each stage.

STAGE OF LIFE	WAYS IN WHICH ALLAH ﷻ NURTURES OUR GROWTH
Infancy and Childhood	
Adolescence	
Adulthood	
Old Age	

2.3 Monotheism (Tawḥīd)

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Discuss Allah ﷻ as the First Cause behind all things.
- Outline and examine the Proof of Design, and give some examples.
- Consider the role of Allah ﷻ as a Nurturer, and what it means for intelligent design.
- Understand that unity and order are evidence of the Oneness of Allah ﷻ.

STORY RECAP: We have been following the story of Ibrahim and how he came to know about the existence of a Wise and Merciful Creator by reflecting upon himself, and the garden which he found himself in. We will continue with the story of Ibrahim in a future lesson. In this lesson, we want to go on a journey similar to that of Ibrahim's! Let us reflect on ourselves and the world around us in order to gain a better appreciation of Allah ﷻ and his signs.

Activity 2.3a: Pre-Reading

1. Have you ever tried to do your homework while having a conversation with your friend, or at the same time as watching television? What is the usual outcome?

2. What are some better strategies for achieving a successful study outcome?

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF ALLAH ﷻ

In the 6th grade, we talked about our innate nature *(fiṭrah)*, and how every human being has intrinsic knowledge of Allah ﷻ. Although we naturally want to know Allah ﷻ, we do not need to **prove** that Allah ﷻ exists; we just need to **remind** ourselves about His existence. There are two opposing forces that are always tugging on a person's heart. On one hand, our desires distract us with things other than Allah ﷻ; and on the other hand, there is our innate God-conscious nature that is pulling us toward Allah ﷻ. Worldly distractions and sins are two sides of the same coin that work together to hide or cover up our innate nature, thus taking us away from Allah ﷻ. This is why so many people end up disbelieving in Allah ﷻ.

Why do we need to remind ourselves of Allah ﷻ through logical proofs? This helps us awaken our *fiṭrah* from the slumber that it may have fallen into, and assists us to reconnect with Allah ﷻ. Logical proofs also aid us when we are discussing Allah ﷻ and His existence with non-believers.

There are many different ways of proving the existence of Allah ﷻ. In this lesson, we are going to discuss Allah ﷻ as the First Cause, as well as the Proof of Design. These two proofs are very much aligned with our innate nature, because we naturally see that the world needs an intelligent and wise Creator.

It is important to remember that this proof is not the only way for us to know Allah ﷻ. If we sin and avoid doing what is obligatory *(wājib)* upon us, then our hearts will become clouded, and these simple proofs which are aligned with our *fiṭrah* may not be too meaningful for us. If, on the other hand, we do what is compulsory *(wājib)* and stay away from what is forbidden *(ḥarām)*, then these proofs will have a greater impact on our lives.

ALLAH ﷻ: THE "FIRST CAUSE"

Whenever we see or experience something, we naturally ask 'why?' or 'what is the reason for this?' When we see something interesting happening in nature, such as a bird making a nest, or an ant touching another ant as it walks past, we are naturally curious about 'why?' Imagine that you are reading a very exciting and interesting book. If someone told you that the book just came about randomly, and the letters and words all put themselves into the right order on their own, would you believe them? You would automatically ask: 'Who is the author of this book?' which is another way of asking about the origin or cause of the book.

The reason we ask this question of 'why' is because we all know deep down that the things we experience with our senses must have a cause. We likewise understand that a thing cannot come from nothing—meaning someone must have created or made it.

Our mind naturally seeks out causes for all things. When we look at the world around us, we also ask ourselves: 'What is the cause of this world?' or 'Who made the universe?' Just like a book cannot come out of nowhere and automatically make itself, this world also could not have just come out of nowhere and made itself. Therefore, it **must** have a Creator who created it—and this Creator is Allah ﷻ.

Activity 2.3b: Questioning the World Around You

Come up with five 'why' questions that you have about the world around you. Do your questions have a definitive answer, or is the cause still being investigated by scientists?

MY '*WHY*' QUESTIONS	Definitive Answer (DA)/ Under Investigation (UI)
Ex. Why do animals not use words to communicate? Do they have their own languages?	DA
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ AND A MAN FROM THE DESERT

There is a famous saying narrated in Islamic literature from a man who lived in the desert as a nomad. When he was asked about his belief in Allah ﷻ, he replied: "The droppings of a camel indicate that a camel passed by here; and the footprints of a human indicate that a human being passed by here. The dark night and the bright day that comes and goes, and the heavens with their constellations—how can these not indicate an Intelligent Maker?" [1]

Such a simple man, who probably never studied or read anything, innately knew that everything must have a cause, and that all the creatures in this world are like footprints or fingerprints that point to a Creator.

1 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol.3, P. 55

Activity 2.3c: Qurʾānic Connection

Memorize the following verse *(āyah)* from the Qurʾān by next week:

أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

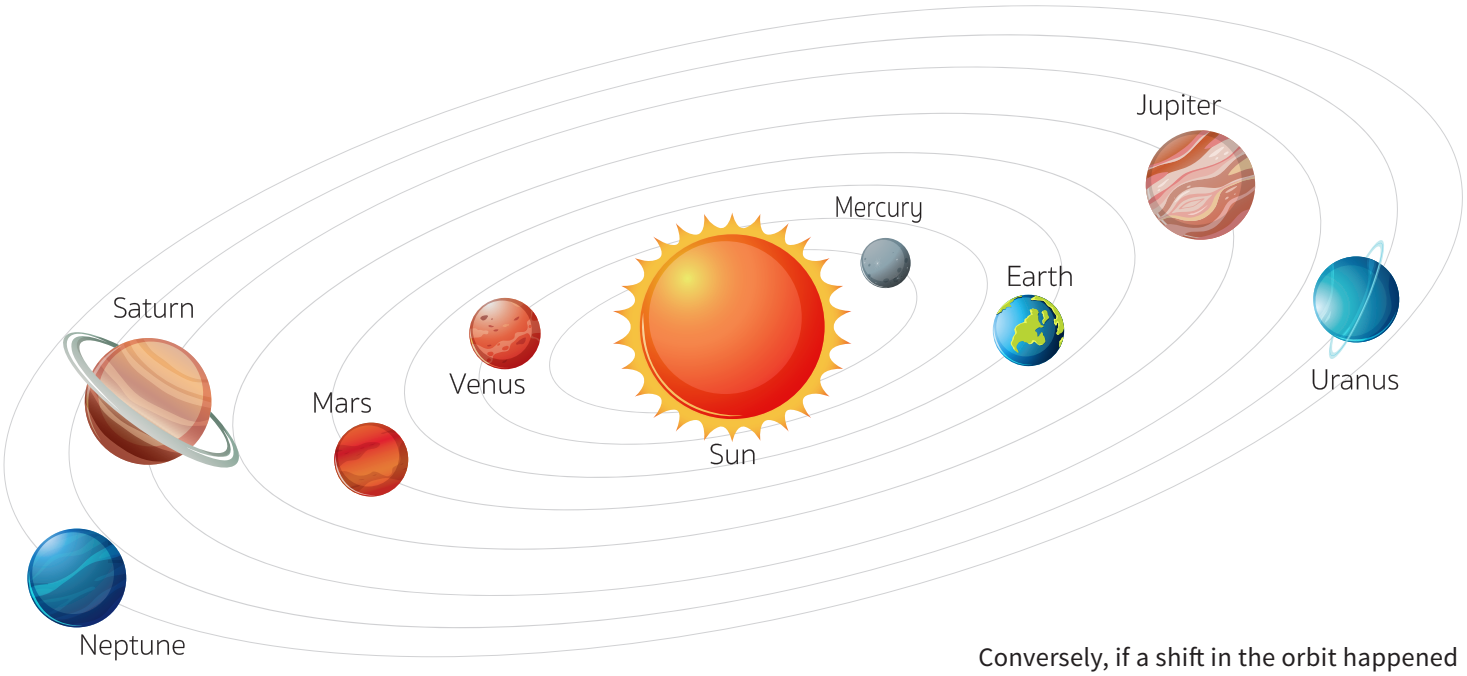
Can there be (any) doubt about Allah ﷻ, the Maker of the heavens and the earth?[2]

How can memorizing the above verse *(āyah)* and reciting it on a regular basis help a person in one's life?

2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14), Verse 10.

ALLAH ﷻ: THE INTELLIGENT DESIGNER

When we look at the world around us, we see that not only does it exist, but it also runs according to a perfect system where everything has its own special place and runs smoothly. The fact that the world is created in such a perfect way tells us that there must be a very intelligent designer who made it. Again, none of us would believe that a machine that works perfectly, randomly made itself. Someone intelligent and wise must have designed it. Similarly, a Designer who is Wise and All-Knowing must have created the entire world, because it runs so perfectly. This Wise Designer is Allah ﷻ.



THE EARTH'S ORBIT AROUND THE SUN

One example of design in the universe is the distance of the planet Earth from the sun, and the special orbit that the Earth makes around the sun.

The Earth moves around the sun at 66.6607 miles (29.8 kms) per second in an orbit which has a very specific path. Had it not been for this fast orbit, the Earth would have moved toward the sun and crashed into it. A shift in the Earth's orbit—closer to or further away from the sun—would primarily affect the planet's temperature. The closer you are to the sun, the hotter the climate would be. Even a small move closer to the sun could have a huge impact. This is because warming of the Earth would cause glaciers to melt, rising sea levels, and flooding throughout most of the planet. Without enough land to absorb some of the sun's heat, temperatures on Earth would continue to rise. Temperatures would also see a boost from the rising levels of the carbon dioxide and vapours that the oceans would release into the air.

Conversely, if a shift in the orbit happened moving Earth farther away from the sun, then this would cool and could potentially even freeze the planet. Oceans would be covered in ice, causing them to release less carbon dioxide and vapor. It would also make each year longer because the farther the planet is from the sun, the longer it would take to complete its annual orbit.

Further to this, a shift in the orbit of the Earth would also have an effect on the rest of the solar system as well. Even a minor change in the path of the Earth around the sun could cause the other planets to collide, and throw off Earth's delicate positioning with Jupiter. The largest of the eight planets, Jupiter, acts like a shield—deflecting harmful gases and asteroids that might otherwise be bound for Earth.[3]

So we can see that even a very small change in the distance of the Earth from the sun, or a tiny change in the path that the Earth takes around the sun, would lead to the end of life, and perhaps even the entire universe. The fact that the Earth is exactly the right distance away from the sun in order to allow for life to sustain points to the existence of an intelligent designer, whom we call Allah or God.

STOP AND REFLECT: Can you think of any other intricate systems that rely on minute details to function properly? Describe what might happen if one piece of this intricate machinery were to fail.

3 https://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/what-if/what-if-earth-changed-its-orbit.htm

ALLAH ﷻ: THE NURTURER (RABB)

STOP AND REFLECT: If you had to describe the process of caring for a house plant from seed to full growth to a friend, what steps would you outline for them? When would your responsibilities toward that house plant end?

Allah ﷻ is the Cause of all things. He created and designed this entire universe. Now, we want to prove that there is **only one** Creator and Designer for this universe, and that is Allah ﷻ. In addition to this, we will also discuss the fact that Allah ﷻ is our Nurturer, meaning that not only did He create all of existence, but He also looks after all of their affairs as well. Thus, one of the Names of Allah ﷻ is the Nurturer—*Ar Rabb* (الرّب).

Allah ﷻ did not just create things then leave them on their own. He created everything and continues to look after things in every way.

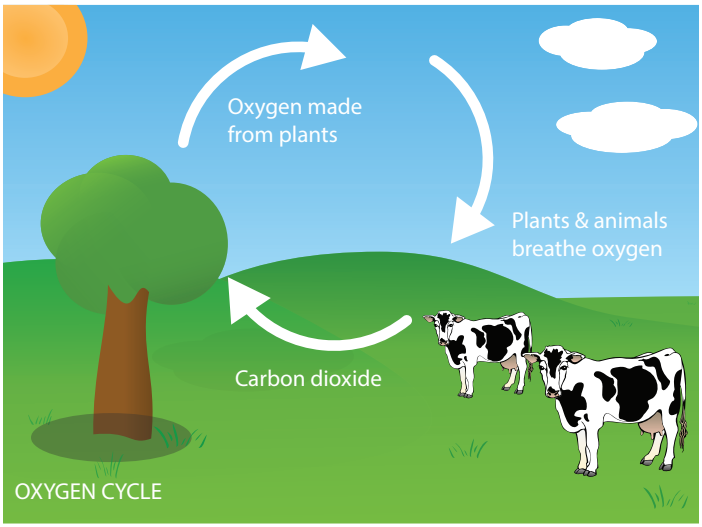
Some people, such as the idol-worshipers who lived at the time of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, believed that Allah ﷻ created this world, but after that, He left other beings to look after their affairs. They worshiped idols, the sun, 'nature', or certain human beings. Some religions, which still exist today, have a similar belief. Let us look at why this belief cannot be true, and the fact that it does not make sense.

Allah ﷻ created this entire universe, so He knows all of its details. He is All-Knowing about everything because it was Him who created and fashioned all things. He is also All-Powerful over everything, and can do anything He wills because it is all His creations.

All other beings which people might take as 'gods' (such as 'idols' or 'nature' or 'a certain human being') are creatures within this world. This means that if they have any knowledge at all, this knowledge will be very limited; and if they have any power at all, this power will also be limited.

Let us look at the example of Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ and his uncle, who was like a father to him. Prophet Ibrāhīm's uncle was an idol-worshiper, and the Prophet ﷺ was trying to teach him about submission to the One God. One of the first things he said to him was: "O my father (uncle), why do you worship something that cannot see, or hear, or help you in any way?" [4]

The other important point is that the world we live in is full of connections and systems. It was created in such a way that each part depends on the other. For example, something as simple as the oxygen that we need to breathe and survive on depends upon a system that includes the sea, the heat from the sun, the mountains, the rivers, the trees, and even the soil on the ground. Since it is Allah ﷻ who created this world with these connections and systems, then automatically it is He who will look after its day to day needs because He created these connections to begin with. It does not make sense for the creatures to look after certain parts of the world independently, because all of the parts are connected; plus, due to the limited knowledge of all creations, they would not even know how to take care of all of the minute details.



So when we breathe, it is Allah ﷻ who provides the air; when we drink, it is Allah ﷻ who gives us water, and so on. Allah ﷻ looks after **all** of the needs of all of His creations—simple or complex, small or great.

4 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Maryam (19), Verse 42.

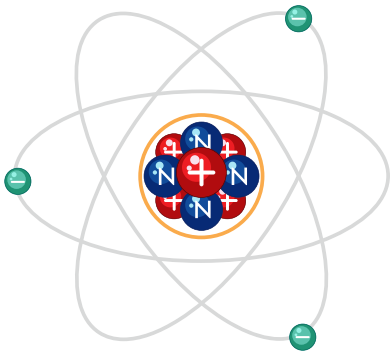
ALLAH ﷻ IS ONE (THE UNITY OF GOD)

Now that we know that the Creator and Nurturer of everything is Allah ﷻ, the next question is: How do we know whether there is only One God who created this world and looks after it, or whether there are many gods?

If there were more than one god in this world, then there would be chaos everywhere because there would be two designers with different ideas, and different ways of doing things. This would result in things not running perfectly in the universe. For example, imagine if the air that people breathe on one side of the world was different from the air that people breathe on the other side because each god decided to design a different type of air—how would anyone be able to live and travel on this planet? This is why Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān:

> "Had there been within them (the heavens and the earth) gods beside Allah, they (the world) would have been ruined (broken down and destroyed)." [5]

OUR WORLD HAS ONE ORDER



When we come to look at this amazing and perfectly designed universe that we live in, we see that everything is designed and built in a uniform and perfect manner. The force of gravity is present in all parts of the planet; the air we breathe has exactly the right concentration of gases that our lungs need to inhale, and this is the same around the world. There are many other examples of such things.

We also see that all of the objects in this world are made of tiny little atoms which contain the same basic components (neutrons, protons, and electrons). Look at something as big as the sun, and something as small as an ant—all of these things are made out of the same basic ingredient: atoms. The Creator who made all of these things, and the Nurturer who looks after them is One and has no partner or equal.

Besides what we have mentioned so far, the most important reason why there can only be One Creator and Nurturer is that if God created this material universe that we live in, then He must be greater than this universe and everything that is within it, and not be limited by it in any way. This means that He is not bound by time, space, or shape; and He is perfect beyond what we can even comprehend.

THE SIGNS OF ALLAH ﷻ IN HIS CREATIONS

The world around us is full of the amazing creations of Allah ﷻ; and each of these creations which are designed so perfectly and beautifully are signs for us that point to the presence of an Intelligent and Wise Creator—whom we call Allah ﷻ.

5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ (21), Verse 22.

Activity 2.3d: The Signs of Allah ﷻ

Choose a window in your learning space to look out from. Can you see any unique features of Allah's creation(s)? What about any systems or natural organizations? For example, a spider's web. Illustrate anything you see that demonstrates the complexity and order of Allah's ﷻ creation(s) in the box provided.

Then, in 3-4 sentences explain the complexity of Allah's ﷻ design in your selection, or the way in which order plays a key role in the structure or function of your selection.

Allah's ﷻ Creations From My Window

Activity 2.3e: Video/Review Questions

FLYING FISH
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bk7McNUjWgw

BIRD VS FISH
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4pxLHG0Wzs

PUFFER FISH
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1PID91sEW8

The following videos show us examples of the amazing abilities that certain types of animals have. It is very beneficial to reflect on these incredible things in nature that remind us of just how precise Allah ﷻ is when He creates anything, as well as how much He cares for each of His creatures.

1. In the first video, what special ability do the fish have?

2. Why do you think God has given these fish this particular ability?

3. In the second video, what special ability do the fish have?

4. Why do you think God has given these fish this particular ability?

5. In the third video, what special ability does the puffer fish have? Why did God give this ability to the puffer fish?

6. What does the great variety in the types of creatures that live in the seas/oceans tell us about the Creator of the universe?

7. What do these special abilities that certain animals have tell us about the Creator of the universe?

2.4 Justice of Allah ﷻ

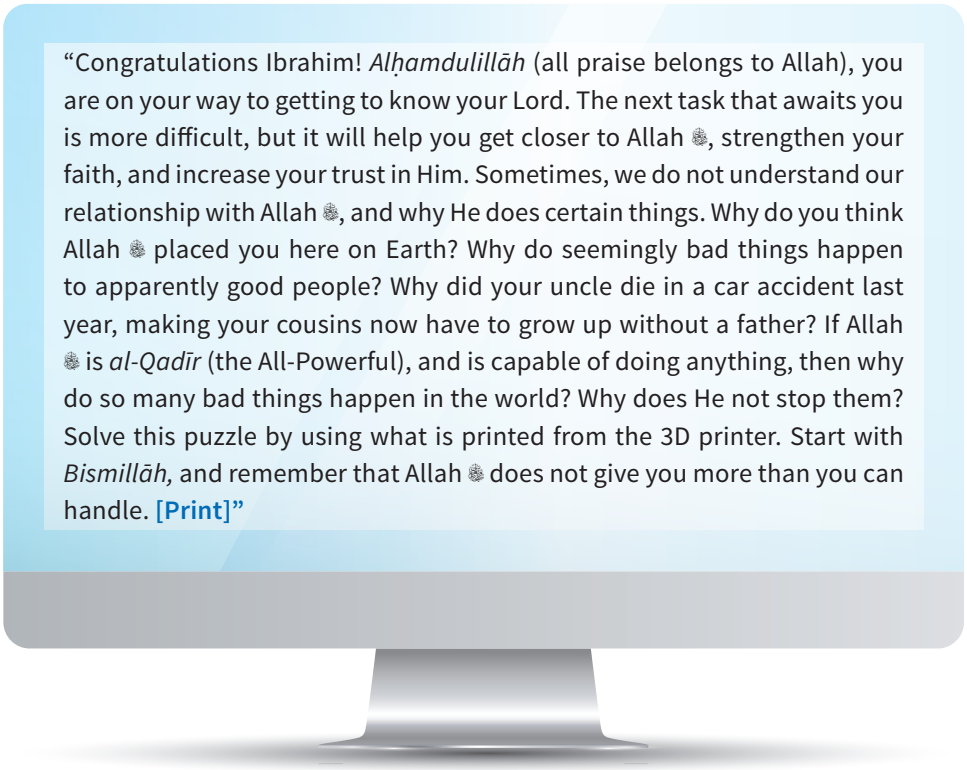
OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Understand the complexity of Allah's plan for this world and the hereafter.
- Examine how the Justice of Allah ﷻ impacts the interpretation of tragedies that happen in the world.
- Apply the analogy of puzzles to humankind's limitations in understanding Allah's Wisdom.
- Understand the reasons why Allah ﷻ allows seemingly bad things to happen.
- Compare and contrast multiple approaches or perspectives to issues which affect human beings.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM
Part 6: Solving the Puzzle

Ibrahim's newfound knowledge about Allah ﷻ had brought serenity to his heart. He knew that Allah ﷻ was his Lord, and was caring for him and training him in the best possible way, beyond what Ibrahim could imagine. After drinking the water that had appeared in the bottle, his thirst was momentarily satisfied. However, he knew that his thirst would not truly be quenched until he reached the fountain on the other side of the glass wall. He walked back to the glass computer screen, entering the four Attributes of Allah ﷻ that he had figured out, and pressed 'Enter'—waiting to see what would happen. A new message appeared on the screen:


"Congratulations Ibrahim! *Alḥamdulillāh* (all praise belongs to Allah), you are on your way to getting to know your Lord. The next task that awaits you is more difficult, but it will help you get closer to Allah ﷻ, strengthen your faith, and increase your trust in Him. Sometimes, we do not understand our relationship with Allah ﷻ, and why He does certain things. Why do you think Allah ﷻ placed you here on Earth? Why do seemingly bad things happen to apparently good people? Why did your uncle die in a car accident last year, making your cousins now have to grow up without a father? If Allah ﷻ is *al-Qadīr* (the All-Powerful), and is capable of doing anything, then why do so many bad things happen in the world? Why does He not stop them? Solve this puzzle by using what is printed from the 3D printer. Start with *Bismillāh,* and remember that Allah ﷻ does not give you more than you can handle. [Print]"

Ibrahim paused and read the message again slowly. These were really difficult questions to answer. Last year, when his uncle died in a car accident, Ibrahim was so confused. For a short time, his cousins were really angry with Allah ﷻ, and Ibrahim did not know what to tell them. His uncle had been killed by a drunk driver.

But what 'wrong' had his cousins done to deserve losing their father? Ibrahim wanted to find out the answers to these questions, so he quickly pressed 'Print' and eagerly grabbed the contents from the printer. The printer kept printing and printing until it had printed almost 100 items. How was he supposed to keep track of this many things? The items that had been printed were all odd shapes. Some of them had hooks, others had holes, and they were all different colors. Some of them faded into other colors, while a few of them were black; some had pictures on them, while a couple were blank. Ibrahim did not know what these pieces were, he had never seen anything like them before. Some of them had words written on them, like "death," "handicapped," "storm," "justice," "realization," "guidance," and more.

He sat on the floor and looked at each piece carefully. Suddenly, he noticed that two of the pieces were connected to each other: they fit each other perfectly, and the hook from one piece fit into a hole in the other. Ibrahim smiled—it was a puzzle, a real puzzle! The other pieces also had to fit together somehow, but how could he put the pieces together when he had no idea what the end result was going to be? It was not the type of puzzle which would be an image such that he might be able to figure it out—this was a 3D puzzle! Ibrahim had done several puzzles before, but he would refer to the picture on the box to see what the final result should look like, or else he would have just given up.

But what does this have to do with bad things happening in the world? Ibrahim thought to himself, but he was quite confused. Sweat started to appear on his face, and he sat down determined to figure out the puzzle. He tried every piece of the puzzle with the other 99 pieces and tried to fit them together in every way possible. There were SO many things to take into consideration to get them to fit, and several different possibilities. He was getting dizzy from the sheer amount of probabilities, but decided to try them, one by one.

Three hours later, Ibrahim managed to fit three pieces together. *There is no way I can do this when I do not have all of the knowledge available to me. How am I supposed to understand a complicated puzzle like this when I don't know everything, and I don't even know what the whole picture looks like?*

A light bulb suddenly went off in Ibrahim's mind as he realized that the key to understanding this was the key to solving the puzzle! *Only the puzzle-maker can know what the puzzle looks like,* he thought to himself.

Allah ﷻ knows everything, and He takes all things into consideration. This world and the hereafter are like a puzzle: all of the pieces fit together in a certain way, but as human beings, we do not always know the whole picture and cannot understand everything. The pieces all do fit together, but it is ONLY Allah ﷻ who really knows how. Bad things that happen in this world are not because Allah ﷻ is unjust, rather they occur due to the fact that He is Just! He knows the entire picture with all of the necessary details, and makes everything fit together perfectly. The puzzle will only make sense when all of the pieces are put together; but if someone is looking at individual pieces, then it will give an odd picture and will not make any sense whatsoever to someone who is observing it from the outside.

He looked up at the computer screen, and the blank spot that was now waiting for his answer. He typed the following: "I do not know what the final image of this puzzle looks like, so I cannot figure this out." He gulped and hit 'Enter.' Fireworks appeared on the screen, then the following verse of the Qurʾān:

وَلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝ يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ ۝

...but most of the people do not know. They just know an outward aspect of the life of this world, but of the hereafter—they are oblivious. [1]

The message on the screen continued: You are right, Ibrahim. In this analogy, Allah ﷻ is the One who made the puzzle. He is the **only** One who understands this entire world, and sees it from all of the various angles, taking every possibility into consideration. The puzzle is a beautiful, flawless picture that only He knows. He sees and is fully aware of this world that we live in and the hereafter. Our perspectives as human beings are very limited. Do you want to see what the puzzle looks like? You will only find out on the other side of this glass wall.

INTRODUCTION

In the previous lessons, we learned about some of the Attributes of Allah ﷻ, and that He is our Lord and Nurturer—the One who is in charge of everything, the One who nurtures us, and the One who gives us opportunities to grow. Ibrahim figured out that he was going through certain difficulties because they would ultimately help him grow and understand Allah ﷻ at a deeper level. In this part of the story, Ibrahim was faced with a more difficult question: Why do bad things happen?

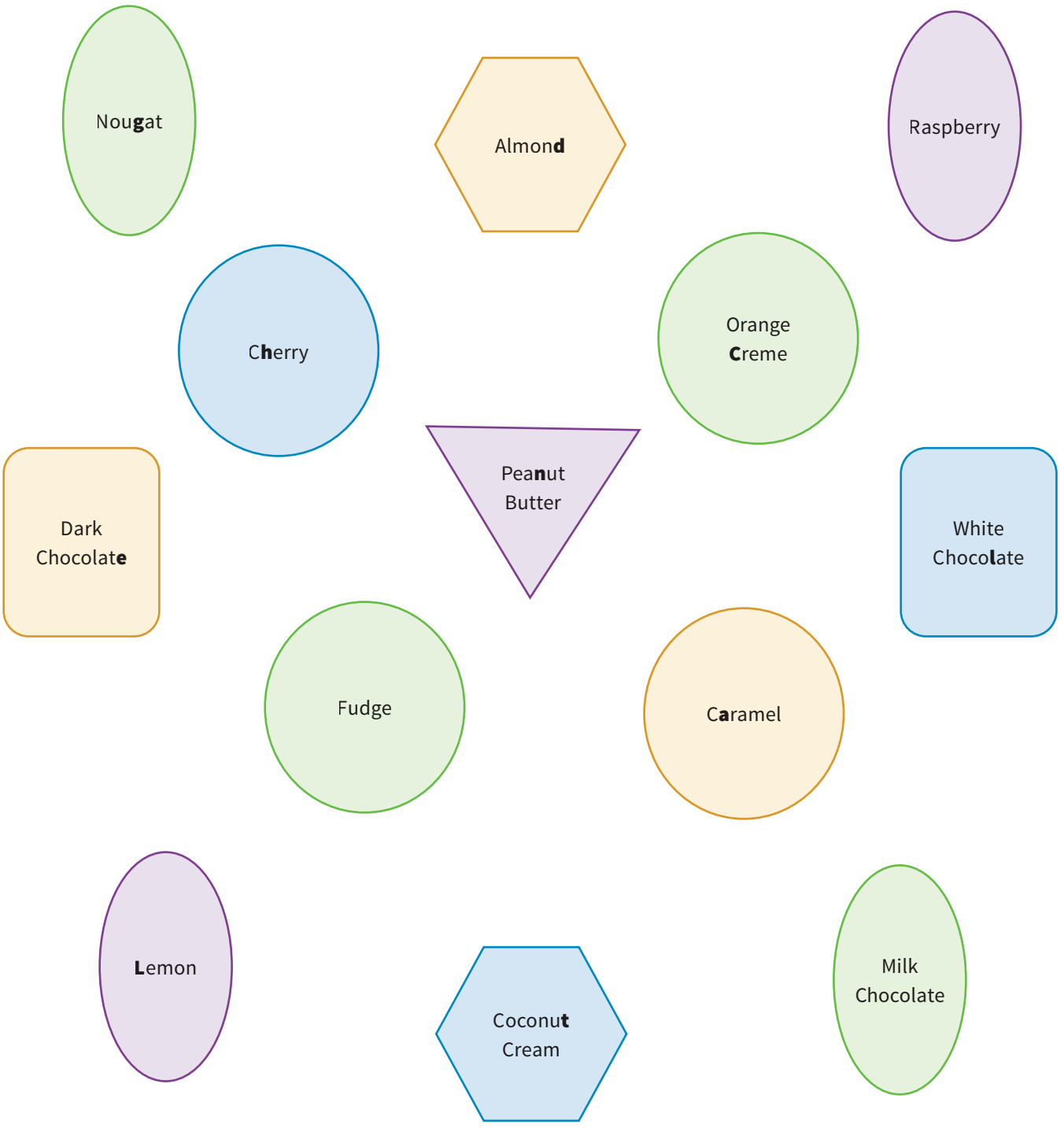
Sometimes, very tragic things happen in our lives,
and it is often difficult for us to understand why they occurred.

Everything seems to be fine, then all of a sudden one day, someone close to us gets killed. Or we watch the news, and find out that there was a huge tsunami and millions of people lost their homes. Or there is a terrible war somewhere in the world and thousands of people are massacred. Oftentimes, it is very difficult for us to understand why all of these things happen. Everything in this world is like those pieces of the puzzle that Ibrahim found. On their own, they do not make a lot of sense and seem to be out of place and confusing to even look at, set aside to understand. We might be curious as to the reason behind these various events, and they often may not make sense to us, but that is okay! Asking these questions and trying to understand the world can be a form of worship, and helps us build our trust in Allah ﷻ. Sometimes, we might understand parts of the puzzle—like the three pieces that Ibrahim found which fit together—but we will never really be able to understand the entire picture because we are limited as human beings.

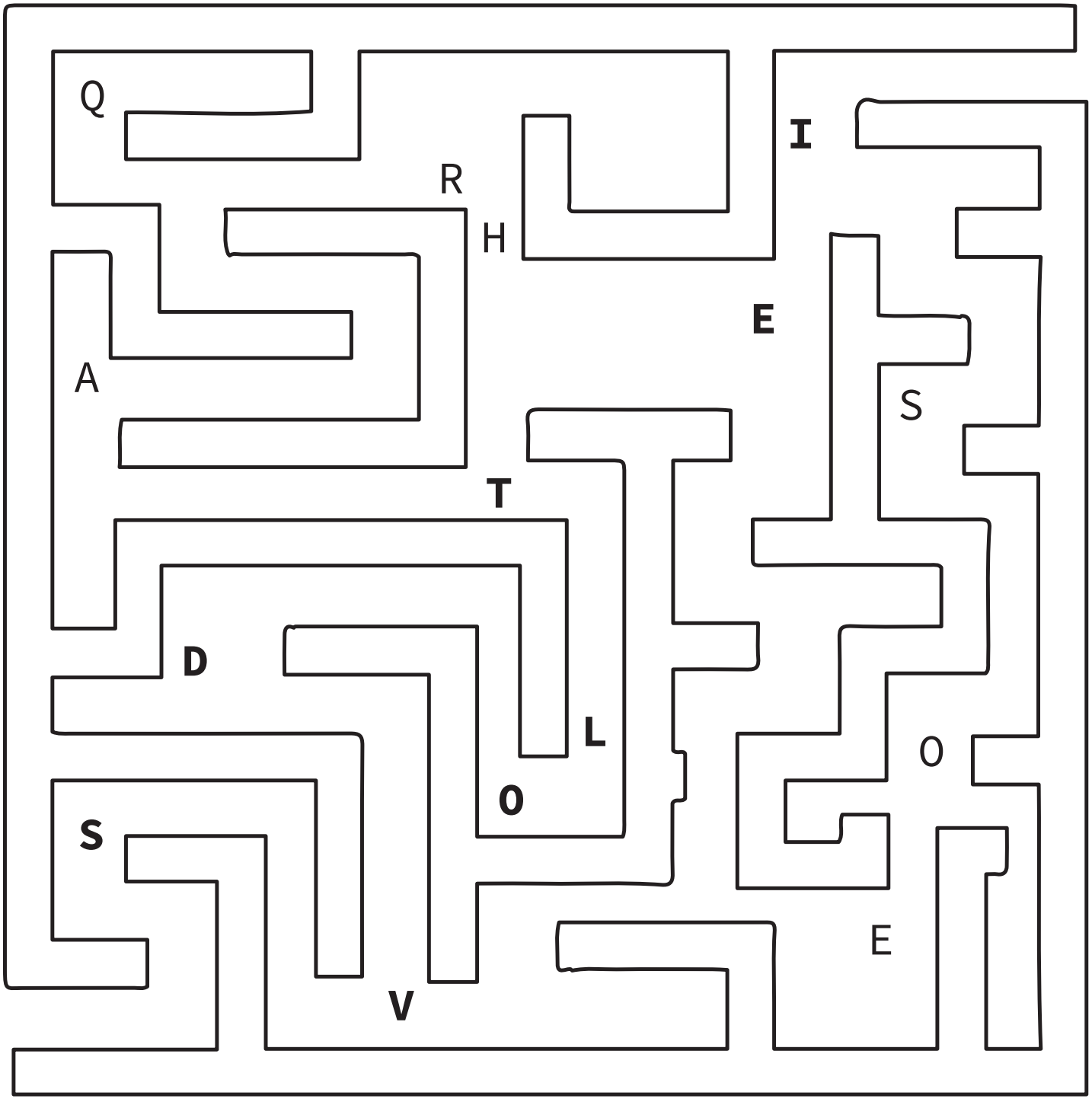
1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ar-Rūm (30), Verse 7.

Activity 2.4a: Puzzle 1

The puzzles below have been provided to you without too many instructions. Independently or with a partner, can you decipher the puzzles?



Activity 2.4b: Puzzle 2



What were some of the clues in the puzzle pieces that helped you decide what steps to take to solve the puzzle(s)? Would you have benefitted from proper instructions to speed your progress or even accuracy along?

WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

One of the reasons why apparently bad things happen in this world is because of our own choices or the choices of those around us. Allah ﷻ created us all with *ʿaql* (reason), and gave us free-will. He also told us and warned us that there will be consequences for all of our actions. Allah ﷻ does not want us to make bad choices, but He allows us to do so in order for our free-will to really be 'free.' Bad choices can often have a negative effect on those who make them, as well as others around them.

For example, if we act rashly or carelessly, then we may get hurt or cause an accident. This is a consequence and result of our own actions. If we eat unhealthy foods, then our bodies may develop certain illnesses, and this will be the outcome of not eating properly. Bad habits such as smoking and drinking can result in diseases, as well as other problems. In the story, we saw that Ibrahim's uncle died because of a drunk driver who hit him. The driver, who consumed something forbidden *(ḥarām)* like alcohol, was the reason for the death of another innocent person. The wrong choice and poor decision that the drunk driver made led to something bad not only for himself, but for other people as well.

A huge problem in the world is hunger. Why are some people extremely wealthy, while others struggle to find enough food for even one meal? Allah ﷻ has created and provided plenty of resources for everyone in this world. However, often people hoard their riches, and even go so far as to steal resources that do not belong to them, or refuse to pay workers a fair wage. The wrong choices made by some of these people is what leads to others going hungry.

Imām ʿAlī ؑ said: "O son of Ādam, whatever you earn beyond your basic needs, you are only a treasurer of it for others."[2] When we have more than what we need, we are responsible for helping others. Islam has highly encouraged charity, and it is even obligatory on us to give a certain portion of our extra wealth to the poor. If everyone was to follow these teachings correctly, then the evil of hunger would disappear.

There are some problems, like global warming, which we can clearly see are a consequence of our own actions. For example, the environmental crisis and global warming exist because of the amount of pollution that human beings have caused, and how they have misused the earth's resources. Being wasteful and greedy can create chaos in the environment. In the Noble Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says: "Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea because of what people have done."[3]

From the last two examples, we understand that some of the world's problems have been caused by human beings themselves, and can also be solved by them as well. However, what about those problems that are not in the control of humankind? What about natural disasters that have always existed, like earthquakes, tornadoes, and tsunamis?

STOP AND REFLECT: Can you think of any human-made disasters that have been detrimental to life on Earth, or caused temporary or long-lasting harm? What consequences will all of humanity have to face as a result of these human choices?

2 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Saying #192.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ar-Rūm (30), Verse 41.

Activity 2.4c: Reflection

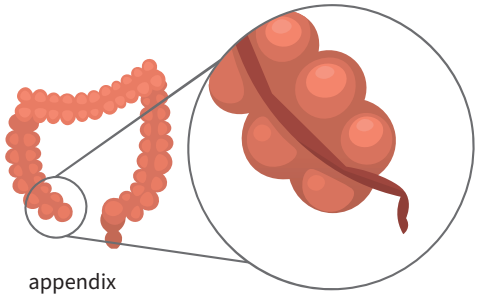
Working independently or with a friend, think about something that happened which seemed to be very bad. It can be something personal (but it has to have actually happened), or a story in the news. Why do you think it was a horrible thing?

What are some of the reasons (using the rationale that we learned in this lesson) why Allah ﷻ might have let this happen? Your story and explanation should be at least 15-20 lines long (written out on a separate piece of paper).

OUR UNDERSTANDING IS VERY LIMITED

Sometimes, it is difficult for us to understand why something that is apparently bad happens. You have probably noticed that we keep referring to these kinds of things as 'apparently bad'. This is because something might 'seem to be' unfair or negative to us on the surface, but our perception of it being bad or negative is only because we cannot see the entire picture. Roll up a piece of paper to look like a telescope and put it over your eye. What do you see? You can only see what is directly in front of you—you cannot even see the sides like you normally can. This is called tunnel vision, and this is an example of our limited understanding.

In the story, Ibrahim finds puzzle pieces, but he cannot solve the puzzle because he does not know what the end picture looks like. He knows that the pieces fit together somehow, but looking at each piece individually leaves him very confused. Each piece of the puzzle looks very odd. They are different colors, and parts are sticking out. There are even random holes in some of them. These pieces will only make sense when they are put together as part of a beautiful picture that results. These puzzle pieces are like things that happen to us in our lives. We might not understand them, and they might seem to be very ugly and negative, but the only reason it seems like this is because we can only see a part of the puzzle. Allah ﷻ, the Puzzle-Maker, sees the whole beautiful picture and knows what the end result will be. What might 'seem' to us as 'unfair' or apparently 'bad' has a deeper reason that we do not understand. Floods seem horrible, but in actuality they bring fertile nutrients to the surface, and can be really beneficial for farming. We have to be careful before labeling something as 'bad' because we do not know the whole picture, and as such have not understood it completely.



appendix

When we look at the human body, we see that it is so complex and intricate, and after thousands of years of existence, humankind still does not fully understand how it works! One example is the appendix: humans still do not know for certain what the role of the appendix is, and for many years people thought it was useless. However, recent research suggests that it might play an important role in storing bacteria that is good for our bodies.[4] But still we do not know for sure. Just because we do not understand the function of the appendix does not mean that it is useless, or that we should just remove it!

Similarly, just because we do not understand everything that happens, we cannot immediately jump to the conclusion that it is unfair or useless. In all situations, we have to trust Allah ﷻ Who is All-Knowledgeable, All-Merciful, our Creator, and Nurturer. He loves us and will always do what is best for us, but we have to put our full trust in Him, and realize that even if we do not understand an 'apparently' unfair event, there is a hidden wisdom behind it that only Allah ﷻ knows.

4 https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/01/170109162333.htm

Activity 2.4d: A Matter of Perspective

Think of three issues or events that may have both pros and cons—depending on how you approach the subject. Record them in the charts below:

SUBJECT 1:

PROs	CONs

Activity 2.3d: A Matter of Perspective (Continued)

SUBJECT 2:

PROs	CONs

Activity 2.3d: A Matter of Perspective (Continued)

SUBJECT 3:

PROs	CONs

THE REAL SOLUTION

The two factors we explored above are important in trying to understand why things that seem to be negative occur. Sometimes, they are consequences of our own actions, and sometimes they are not fully bad—we just cannot understand them properly. In the story, when Ibrahim realized that he did not know how to solve the puzzle, a verse of the Qur'ān appeared on the screen. The verse said that human beings: "know just an outward aspect of the life of this world, but they are oblivious of the hereafter." [5] Allah ﷻ is telling us here that we can only see part of the picture in this world, we do not know about the final outcome, nor take the hereafter into consideration. The other two factors above may help us make sense of suffering in this world, but the puzzle will only make sense when we have the entire picture—and that entire picture includes the hereafter!

We were not created for this world, and this world by its nature is imperfect and limited. It does not have the ability to be perfect. You might be wondering, what does this mean? Imagine you have a huge bucket and want to fill it with all of the water that exists in this world. No matter how hard you try, you will not be able to do this. Why not? Due to the fact that the bucket has a limited capacity. Similarly, this temporary world that we are currently living in does not have the ability or capacity to be perfect in all areas. On the other hand, the hereafter, the next world, is eternal. By its very nature, it is perfect and not limited. True justice can only be achieved in the hereafter, because it is not limited. In this world, we might see two individuals—one who is suffering from extreme poverty, and one who is thriving in extreme wealth. As mentioned earlier, this is because people are not fulfilling their responsibilities by sharing the resources that Allah ﷻ has given to everyone. One may ask: But what did that poor person do to deserve this? Why should they be punished for someone else doing something wrong? Our limited understanding prevents us from seeing the ultimate justice of Allah ﷻ. Now think about the Hereafter: imagine how much a person who suffered from poverty in this world will be rewarded for their patience in the next world which is everlasting.

Think about getting an injection or a vaccination that you have to get at a clinic—the 30 seconds of temporary pain that you may experience is not bad or unjust because in the long run, you will benefit immensely from it. The same goes for this world, it is temporary, and so is the pain that we feel in it. In the long run, this pain will definitely benefit us if we remain patient!

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ؒ said the following about those who face calamities, but forbear them and remain patient: "Allah will compensate them so much that if they were given the opportunity to come back to this world to experience those difficulties again, they would prefer to come back to gain more rewards." [6]

Allah ﷻ is *al-ʿAdl* (the All-Just), and this justice makes complete sense when we take the hereafter into consideration as part of the overall picture.

Allah ﷻ is our Lord and Nurturer *(Rabb)*, and through His Mercy and Wisdom, He wants to guide us toward our purpose which is becoming closer to Him. He only wants what is best for us, and for us to get to Paradise. We need to use the various hardships in our lives as a means to grow in the best way possible, and trust that these tests and trials have the potential to take us higher in what is best for us. When we keep the hereafter in mind, the supposed injustices that we see in the world make more sense!

5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ar-Rūm (30), Verse 7.
6 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 3, P. 71.

Activity 2.4e: Tunnel Vision

Choose a full wall in your classroom/learning space and take inventory of everything that you see. Now, roll up a piece of paper into a telescope that is approximately 2-3 inches in diameter. Describe the items you are able to see through your telescope. How many items on your list would you have never known existed if your vision was only limited to the space within your paper telescope? What could this metaphor mean for our 'vision' in this world?

ITEMS MISSED

INVENTORY OF MY CLASSROOM

VISIBLE THROUGH MY TELESCOPE

Activity 2.4f: Review Questions

KEY POINTS

- Many of the world's problems are a result and consequence of our own poor choices (cause and effect).
- Our limited understanding prevents us from seeing the Wisdom of Allah ﷻ behind certain 'seemingly unfair' incidents.
- True justice can never be achieved in this world because it is limited; it can only be achieved in the hereafter.
- We must use the hardships and difficulties in our lives as a means to grow, and reach our true purpose in this world.

1. Why do bad things happen to us?

2. Why can we not understand everything that happens in this world?

3. Is this world just? What is justice?

4. Why does everyone have to face difficulties in this life?

Activity 2.4g: The Justice of Allah ﷻ

Read the following verses of the Noble Qurʾān. What do these verses tell you about why bad things happen in this world?

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُم بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ۝

Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea because of the doings of the people's hands, that He may make them taste something (the consequences) of what they have done, so that perhaps they may return (come back to righteousness). [7]

وَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Yet it may be that you dislike something which is good for you; and it may be that you love something which is bad for you; and Allah knows while you do not know. [8]

7 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ar-Rūm (30), Verse 41.
8 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 216.

CHAPTER 3

Divine Guides

3.1 The Need for Divine Guides
3.2 Why We Need Prophets
3.3 From Prophethood to Imamate
3.4 Immaculateness (ʿIṣmah)
3.5 An Introduction to the Noble Qurʾān

3.1 The Need for Divine Guides

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

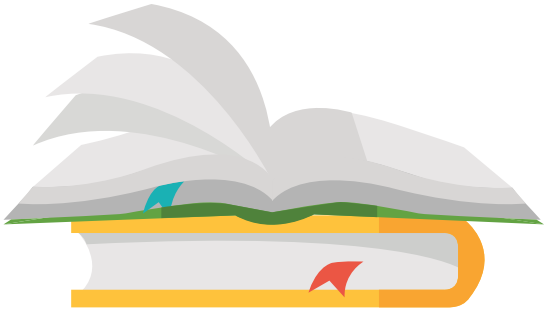
- Learn about the external guidance provided by Allah ﷻ.
- Understand why guides were sent to help human beings fulfill their purpose.
- Consider how these guides were given by Allah ﷻ to help humankind.
- Explore the reasons why guides are necessary to understand the religion.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM
Part 7: Taking a Guide

Ibrahim wakes up in a mysterious garden, and is given clues and tests that help him realize his purpose in life. He needs to figure out what to do in order to achieve his purpose. He gained some knowledge of Allah ﷻ through solving puzzles on a computer that he found, and understands that these difficulties that he is going through will help him grow. He needs to get to the water fountain on the other side of the glass wall, but he does not know what lies ahead.

Ibrahim succeeded at yet another test on the computer, but he has no idea what is waiting for him next. He has figured out that if he is able to pass the tests that are being given to him, then somehow he will end up on the other side, and have access to the water fountain. Allah ﷻ has put him here for a reason! He felt overwhelmed with a sense of love for Allah ﷻ. His Mercy and Beauty was more than Ibrahim had ever imagined, and now he wants to get as close to Him as possible!

He walked over to the computer screen and waited for something to happen. Ibrahim was ready for his next task, but nothing was happening—it was as if the computer had died or lost power. He started to press the screen and draw random shapes, hoping that something would happen. There was no keyboard anywhere, so he did not know how to type or input any message into the computer. Instead, he just used his fingers, and then wrote: "Help me! What do I do next?" All of a sudden, he heard a whirring sound, and a new message appeared on the screen:



"Ibrahim! You know that you need to get to the other side of the glass wall, and it is only there that your thirst will be fully quenched. If you truly love Allah ﷻ and want to serve Him, then you will get there. Many challenging tasks await you in order for you to get there. **[Print]**"

STOP AND REFLECT: What do you think the computer will print out to help Ibrahim get closer to Allah ﷻ, and travel to the other side of the glass wall?

Huh? Ibrahim was very confused. This time, the computer had not even assigned any task. He pressed print, and from the 3D printer, a book came out. He opened it up. It was in a language that was oddly familiar—it was Arabic! He had seen the book before too—it was the Noble Qurʾān. He grinned since he knew what the book was. Then another book printed out, and on the cover it said 'Dictionary.' Even though he was familiar with the Qurʾān and had read it, he had only ever read the whole thing in Arabic. He had read some parts of it in English, but not too many. He had no idea what most of it meant. So, the dictionary would probably come in handy.

He opened the Qurʾān and stared at the Arabic, then tried to look up some of the words in the dictionary. It was really complicated. He felt kind of regretful that he had not done this before. He had been reading the Qurʾān for so many years, and knew that it was supposed to be a source of guidance for him, but he did not even know what it said! After an hour of looking through the dictionary, and piecing together some of the words that he knew, he was able to figure out the following sentence:

وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And We have sent down to you the reminder (the Qurʾān) so that you may clarify (explain) for the people that which has been sent down to them, so perhaps they may reflect.[1]

Wow! Ibrahim was amazed—the Qurʾān was telling him that Allah ﷻ sent the Prophet ﷺ to explain the Qurʾān to all of humankind.

It guided him through this one sentence. No wonder the Qurʾān was a true source of guidance! He now felt enlightened because he knew that there was a source of help through the Prophet ﷺ. As soon as this thought came to his mind, he heard a shuffling noise. He glanced up and looked at the glass wall. The gray-haired man wearing the glasses that he had seen earlier was back, but he was still on the other side of the glass wall! However, this time he saw Ibrahim and was trying to communicate with him! He jumped up and grinned. Ibrahim said: "Salāmun ʿalaykum! Can you please show me how to get out of here? I am stuck!" The old man smiled, then casually walked through the glass walls and came up to Ibrahim. Ibrahim's face went completely pale. *How did he just walk through a wall?*

"Wa ʿalaykum as-salām, Ibrahim!" said the old man. "Do not be scared! The glass walls are your own barriers—they only exist for you. I do not have those same barriers, so I can walk wherever I want to in this garden, including the other side. The barriers represent your sins and bad qualities."

STOP AND REFLECT: Why do you think Ibrahim's sins and bad qualities manifest themselves as barriers between him and Allah ﷻ. How might sins affect a person, and work against one's journey to learn more about Allah ﷻ and become closer to Him?

Ibrahim was amazed. "So, is it possible to get to the other side?"

The old man nodded and continued talking. "Yes, it is very possible, but you cannot do it without help, or someone showing you how. You were able to understand Allah ﷻ to a small degree using your own intellect *(ʿaql)* and innate disposition *(fiṭrah)*, but now you have reached a point where that is not enough, and you need something more. You came asking for guidance, so Allah ﷻ provided it for you through His Book and people who can guide you!" Ibrahim furrowed his eyebrows, then smiled. *Who is this man? Can he show me the way?* Ibrahim thought to himself.

So far, we have learned that our purpose in this life is to attain closeness to Allah ﷻ, and reach our ultimate goal of perfection by worshiping Him, and doing good deeds with the intention of gaining the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. We also learned about some of the characteristics of Allah ﷻ, like how He is All-Merciful, and All-Just. He wants us to reach this purpose, and because of that He has given us internal guides to do so. These internal guides include our reason *(ʿaql)* and our God-seeking innate human nature *(fiṭrah)*. However, these two tools alone are not enough to get us all the way to perfection.

In this story, Ibrahim reached a certain level through these two tools, but is now at a point where he is not sure about what he is supposed to do next. Our knowledge and Ibrahim's knowledge is limited; we do not know about the unseen world, and our *fiṭrah* can become contaminated through sinning, which clouds our ability to make good decisions aligned with what our Almighty Creator wants. Allah ﷻ sent us Divinely-appointed guides who teach us the necessary things that we need to follow in order to be successful in reaching our purpose.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Naḥl (16), Verse 44.

Activity 3.1a: Expert Advice!

There are many times in our lives when we reach the limit of our abilities or knowledge, and have to seek external guidance from experts. Whether it be calling a tutor to help with math, or reading a researcher's study on whether or not a vaccine is effective, etc., at some point or another, all of us need some external guidance in our lives. Think about a situation in which you needed help from an "expert." Answer the questions below with that situation in mind.

1. What problem were you facing?

2. How did you realize that you need to call an expert? What indicated to you that you had reached the limit of your own knowledge?

3. What expert did you call, or refer to for help? Why did you choose that expert in particular? What qualities were you looking for in your expert?

THE NEED FOR DIVINELY-APPOINTED GUIDES

Imagine that your school prepared a huge Award Ceremony at the end of the year for those who excelled in their studies. The Principal and administration wanted as many students as possible to receive the award. Imagine that all of this was set up, but the school administration never told any of the students how they could receive the award. Would that make any sense at all? On a similar note, would it make sense that Allah ﷻ has kept a great reward for us in the hereafter, namely Paradise and all of its blessings, and He wants everyone to reach there, but He does not show anyone how to get there? Of course not! Allah ﷻ is All-Beneficent and All-Merciful, and He has guaranteed that He will provide guidance to all of humanity—this is His absolute promise!

In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says:
"Surely, it is (incumbent) upon Us [Allah] to guide." [2]

Allah ﷻ has told us that He will hold us responsible for our actions on the Day of Judgment. Would it be fair for Him to hold us accountable if He did not tell us what we will be held accountable for? Imagine if your teacher gave you a test, but never taught you the material that is on the test, and then punished you for not passing it. Would that be fair? Of course not! Alḥamdulillāh, Allah ﷻ is All-Just and All-Merciful, and He sent us leaders and teachers who taught us about His guidelines. Allah ﷻ has given us all of these teachings as a mercy to help us and guide us throughout our lives. Our existence is a gift from Allah ﷻ—He does not benefit from us at all! When we think about life like this—that He has provided us with guidance, and a chance to get to somewhere like Paradise *(Jannah)*, and He has shown us exactly how to do that—it is a beautiful portrayal of His never-ending Mercy.

As we have discussed earlier, Allah ﷻ sent us guidelines in the form of religion—but how do we get these teachings and religion? How does Allah ﷻ send them to us? We know that we have been given a Divine Book, the Qurʾān; and it contains some of these guidelines and rules to follow, but it also guides us to something more, which is the importance of referring to the Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ as role models and leaders.

2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Layl (92), Verse 12.

Activity 3.1b: Build and Discuss

Take out two sheets of paper, markers, scissors, and glue or tape. Working independently and completely silently, make a house using these materials. After 10 minutes, put your house on your desk and walk around to see the students' creations.

Answer the following questions independently, then you will discuss them together as a class.

1. How and why did the houses differ?

2. What was missing from this activity that would have ensured that everyone had the same outcome?

3. If the materials and the goal—'to make a house'—were the same for everyone, why was the final result not the same for all of the students?

4. How does this relate to our need for a guide in Islam?

STORY CONNECTION: In the story, Ibrahim was given a book and a dictionary, but he realized that this was not enough. In fact, the Qurʾān itself told him that in order to understand it properly, he needs to refer to the Divine guides appointed by Allah ﷻ.

Imagine that instead of going to school, you just had a pile of books that you were told to read. It would not be an effective way to learn. We need teachers to explain these textbooks in order for us to get a true understanding of things. The Qurʾān is not like other books, and people will still benefit from it even if they do not understand all of the words; but understanding it and getting explanations on its deeper meanings is an important part of being completely guided (we will learn about the Qurʾān in more detail in future lessons). The Qurʾān itself tells us to go to the Divine guides for help in comprehending its words and teaching its correct messages. In the story, the wise old man is there to teach Ibrahim, and help him develop a better understanding of the book.

WHO ARE THE DIVINELY-APPOINTED GUIDES?

STOP AND REFLECT: We know that our main purpose in life is to become as close to Allah ﷻ as possible. If we have Divinely-appointed guides to help us do this, what should they be like? Why?

What criteria would Allah ﷻ choose to help us get closest to Him? It only makes sense that He would send individuals as guides who are as close to Him as is possible so that they can teach us by example. It would not make sense for Allah ﷻ to choose mediocre individuals who are not really close to Him to show us how we can be close to Him. Imagine if you wanted to become the best athlete in the world: would you ask your friend to train you who does not know much about anything in regards to athletics; or would you seek out an Olympic athlete to emulate who you know has succeeded? Initially, you might find a friend who is good to train you, but if you want to really excel, then you will have to go for the best.

We know that the Divine guides that Allah ﷻ appointed for us to follow are the most qualified to guide us. They made good choices with Godly intentions their entire lives, and reached a level of perfection and closeness to Allah ﷻ that made them worthy of being followed, which is why Allah ﷻ chose them to teach us. Furthermore, the Almighty helped them guide us by strengthening them with certain tools. One of these tools was a special type of knowledge given to them by Allah ﷻ. They had a complete understanding of not only this world, but also the unseen world. In the previous unit, we discussed the fact that usually when we look at something, we are not looking at the whole picture. However, our Divine guides look at the entire picture, and they know what the consequences of every action is in the next world. They have been granted this knowledge by the permission of Allah ﷻ.

Another tool that Allah ﷻ gave them is *ʿiṣmah*. *ʿIṣmah* is 'a special type of protection' that Allah ﷻ grants to those who attain a certain level of piety and God-consciousness *(taqwā)* through their hard work and obedience. We will learn more about *ʿiṣmah* in the upcoming lessons. With these tools, our Divine guides, the Prophets and Imāms ﷺ, are fully equipped to guide us to become the best in this world and attain a successful hereafter.

The Divine guides that Allah ﷻ appointed for us to follow are the most qualified to guide us.

MORE ABOUT THE DIVINE GUIDES

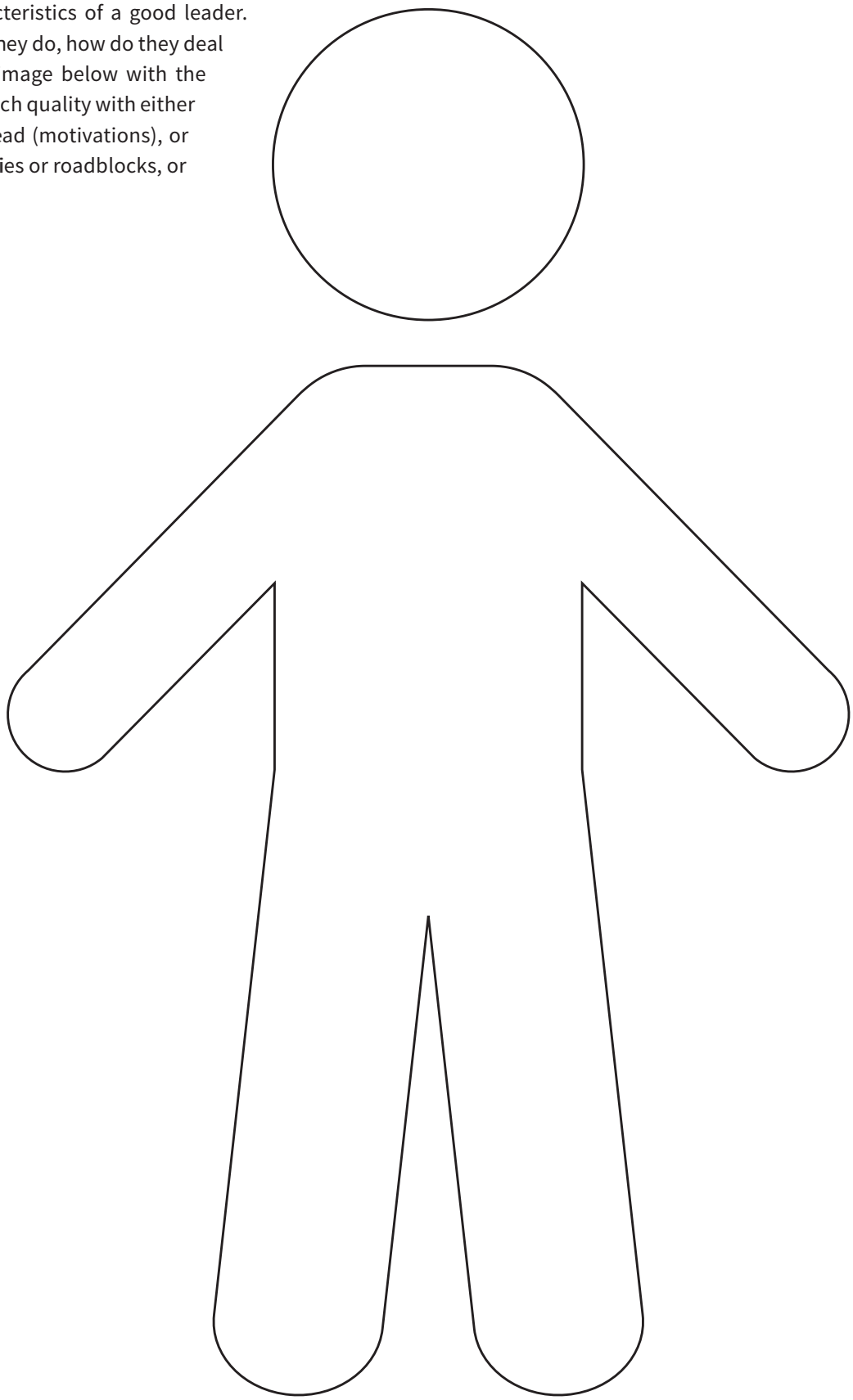
We know that the Prophets and Imāms ﷺ were appointed by Allah ﷻ, and sent to help and guide us toward becoming more perfect individuals. But what did they do throughout their lives, and what was their relationship like with those around them? The Prophets ﷺ were sent all over the world. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says: "And We certainly sent to every nation a Messenger." [3] These Prophets ﷺ were known to their communities as trustworthy individuals who were always honest, hard-working, helping others, and never hurt anyone. They did their best to lead their communities to perfection; and were the best, most righteous role models for them.

Often, when we think about leaders, we think of a CEO who sits at a desk, orders everybody around, and makes a lot of money. However, this was not what the Prophets and Imāms ﷺ were like. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ mentions in several places how these Divinely-appointed guides did not want any type of money or reward for guiding the people.

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Naḥl (16), Verse 36.

Activity 3.1c: What Qualities should be in a Leader?

In pairs, think about the characteristics of a good leader. What motivates them, what do they do, how do they deal with issues, etc. Surround the image below with the qualities you think of, and link each quality with either the hands (doing things), the head (motivations), or feet (how they deal with difficulties or roadblocks, or how they guide other people).



Throughout the Qurʾān, we have several references of various Prophets ﷺ who shared the same message that their reward lies only with Allah ﷻ. One specific example can be found where Prophet Hūd ﷺ went to his people of ʿĀd and told them: "O my people, I do not ask you for any reward. My reward is only from the One who created me. Then will you not reason?" [4]

They truly cared for their communities and just wanted what was best for them. In fact, all of the Prophets ﷺ would fend for themselves and had jobs on the side to earn a living. Many of them were farmers or traders and worked really hard. This shows their humbleness and how they were true guides; they had nothing worldly to gain from all of their efforts! The only thing they wanted was for everybody to be guided to the right path. Like Allah ﷻ, they loved everyone and wanted people to succeed in this world and the next.

In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says that the message of every Prophet was to: "Worship (only) Allah and reject (all) false gods." [5] Unfortunately though, most of the time people would make fun of the Prophets ﷺ, and refuse to listen to them even though it was for their own good, but the Prophets ﷺ continued to act in the kindest of ways. They not only told people how to get closer to Allah ﷻ, but they showed them through their own actions, and by setting practical examples.

KEY POINTS

- The intellect *(ʿaql)* and God-given innate nature *(fiṭrah)* are not enough to guide us completely and can only get us so far.
- We need further guidance and explanations like the Qurʾān, which can be better explained through a teacher or guide.
- Allah ﷻ, in His ultimate Kindness and Mercy, sent us Divine guides known as the Prophets and Imāms ﷺ to teach us.
- These Divine leaders did not want anything in return from the people that they were guiding; all they wanted was to obey Allah ﷻ, and become closer to Him by fulfilling their responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Allah ﷻ gave us all the tools that we need to reach our purpose. He gave us internal guides like the intellect *(ʿaql)* and the innate nature *(fiṭrah);* and He sent us external guides like the Qurʾān and Divinely-appointed guides. All of these things help us in our journey toward Allah ﷻ and becoming closer to Him. If we do not learn from them and take advantage of these tools, then we will not have any excuse on the Day of Judgment!

4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Hūd (11), Verse 51.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Naḥl (16), Verse 36.

Activity 3.1d: Gains and Guidance

We have established the fact that we need two types of guidance—internal *(ʿaql* and *fiṭrah)* and external (Qurʾān and Divinely-appointed guides). Use the venn diagram below to explore the purposes and relationship between the different guides that Allah ﷻ has given us. Then answer the questions below.

1. What is the difference between our internal and external guides?

2. Why do you think Allah ﷻ has given us both kinds of guidance?

3. How do they work together?

4. What are some examples of situations where we use each kind of guidance?

Activity 3.1e: Divine Guides

Read the following two verses. What do these verses of the Qur'ān tell you about the Divine leaders sent by Allah ﷻ?

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَىٰ

Surely, it is Our (Allah's) responsibility to give guidance.[6]

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

Allah ﷻ certainly favored the believers when He sent from them a Prophet from among themselves to read to them His signs, and purify them, and teach them the Book (the Qur'ān) and the wisdom, although earlier they were indeed in clear error.[7]

6 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Layl (92), Verse 12.
7 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl ʿImrān (3), Verse 164.

1. Think back to the house activity. Do you think the class would have been more successful and uniform if the teacher had shown you a sample house, or walked you through how to use your materials to create a house?

2. What two tools are Divine leaders given? Why do you think Allah ﷻ gave them these tools—how would they help in guiding the people?

3. How does the existence of religious guides show us the Mercy of Allah ﷻ?

3.2 Why We Need Prophets

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Understand the need for Divinely-appointed guides.
- Discover the difficulties that the Prophets ﷺ had to face.
- Explore the characteristics that the Prophets ﷺ used to overcome the difficulties which they faced.

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim is a young man who wakes up in a garden, and needs to get some water in order to survive. After some time, he realizes his purpose for being in the garden; and following a series of tests, he meets an older man who tells him that in addition to intellect *(ʿaql)* and one's innate nature *(fiṭrah)*, we also need leaders/role models to guide us. The Creator has provided these in the form of Divine Books, and people whom He appointed to teach humanity.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM

Part 8: The Wise Old Man

Ibrahim and the wise old man walked around the garden together for hours. Every so often, Ibrahim would bump into one of his glass walls, but the old man would not. Ibrahim was amazed at how much the man knew, and he thought to himself: *Who could this man be?*

Just then, the wise old man told him that his name was Saduq, and that he had been named after the famous Shīʿah scholar, Shaykh Ṣadūq, who had written a lot about the Islamic belief system. This old man had studied religion for many years in the noble cities of Najaf and Qum, and now he roamed the world working as a trader, and helped others like Ibrahim find their way and break down their glass walls.

Activity 3.2a: Research and Summarize

Shaykh Ṣadūq was an incredible scholar and played an integral role in creating texts that we use even up until today! If you have enjoyed listening to a lecture, then chances are that you owe something to Shaykh Ṣadūq! Take a few moments at home to research his struggles, what books he wrote, and about his life in general. Summarize this in 10-15 sentences below in your own words. Be sure to include the sources that you used.

The beard of the old man, Saduq, was full and gray, and accented the dark color of his glasses. He seemed wise, and it was clear that he knew so much about the world around him. Saduq taught Ibrahim many things as they walked around. Even though there was a huge age gap between them, they seemed to relate very well to one another; and Ibrahim appreciated how much Saduq knew from all that he had learned throughout his life. He was 75 years old! Out of respect, Ibrahim decided to call him Uncle Saduq.

Saduq taught him about a lot of things, and as they walked in the garden, he even helped Ibrahim break down some of his glass walls. Ibrahim, like most other people in the world, had various problems with his behavior. Saduq helped him address some of these issues, and every time he fixed one of them, a glass wall came crashing down! [You are probably wondering how they came crashing down, and you will find out about that later!]

The two of them talked for hours, and Saduq began to tell Ibrahim about the greatest individuals to walk the face of this Earth—known as the Prophets of Allah ﷺ. They were very connected to the Almighty ﷻ, and He chose them to represent Him. One could not even imagine ever attaining such an honorable position with the Creator like they had reached. Ibrahim wanted to be like them so much—but their status was such because of their God-consciousness *(taqwā)*, and dedication to Allah ﷻ. They were the most perfect individuals, and the way in which Saduq spoke about them was very inspiring. Ibrahim had never thought about the Prophets ﷺ in the way that Saduq was explaining. From the amazing stories of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ to Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ—there was so much to learn.

Saduq then said: "Ibrahim, I need you to listen very carefully. I am about to tell you the most important things about these Divine guides, and it is this information about them that is going to help you and be relevant for you. It will help you pass these tests, and get to the other side of the glass wall."

Ibrahim's eyes widened, and he listened intently as Saduq began to tell him more about some of these greatest men to walk the face of this Earth. Then he asked him: "Ibrahim, do you want to know even more about these individuals?"

"Yes!" Ibrahim cried out eagerly. "I want to know about their wonderful characteristics. What was it about them that was so special that they were assigned to be Prophets by Allah, and that Allah helped them with certain blessings?"

STOP AND REFLECT: What do you think the Prophets' ﷺ most wonderful characteristics were?

Saduq told him: "Pay attention, Ibrahim, these were no ordinary people. They were human beings specially chosen by Allah ﷻ; and their stories are no ordinary stories."

DIVINELY-APPOINTED GUIDES

Out of His infinite Kindness and Mercy, Allah ﷻ sent guides to show humanity how to become closer to Him in the best way possible. Some people think that Allah ﷻ created us, then just left us to do whatever we want to do, but this is not true! He is continuously helping us, and sent us immaculate teachers to help us along the way.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why did Allah ﷻ not send us angels to tell us what to do?

The reason why Allah ﷻ did not send angels to teach us is because our guides are also our role models, and they have to be human beings so that we can relate and connect to them. They were humans just like us, and they had to face life and its challenges just like we do. If this was not the case, then we could use this as an excuse that we cannot emulate them.

In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says that: "We did not send any Messenger except with the language of his people;" [1] "And We have already sent Messengers before you (O Muḥammad) and assigned to them wives and offspring;" [2] and "…they (the Messengers) ate food and walked in the markets." [3]

When we know that our Divine guides are human beings like us, then we realize that they understood our struggles and difficulties because they too went through trials and tribulations in life. They also went through pain and hardships, but showed us how to overcome these afflictions with faith, patience, and forbearance. They showed us that by making good choices, we too can reach a higher status, both in this world and the next. These Divine leaders, like the Prophets ﷺ, Imāms ﷺ, and Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ, are all our perfect role models who show us how to live and behave in every area of our lives. It is important to learn about their qualities and characteristics so that we can see how to follow in their footsteps, and attain spiritual perfection. Think about it: If you want to become rich, would you not follow the instructions of the richest person in the world? Similarly, if you want to become spiritually rich, and the closest that you can be to Allah ﷻ, would you not follow the footsteps of those who are closest to Allah ﷻ and the most perfect of all?

Out of His infinite Kindness and Mercy, Allah ﷻ sent guides to show humanity how to become closer to Him in the best way possible.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14), Verse 4.
2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ar-Raʿd (13), Verse 38.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Furqān (25), Verse 20.

Activity 3.2b: Karbalāʾ and Me

Think about the tragedy of Karbalāʾ—the different people who were there and what they went through. Choose one person or one struggle from the event that relates to you, and write a paragraph about how that part of the story of Karbalāʾ helped you grow as a person, and as a Muslim.

THE DIFFICULT MISSION

Before we can begin to understand the qualities of the Prophets and how they were role models, we have to understand the significance of their responsibilities. They were not only chosen and sent by Allah ﷻ, but they were also strengthened by Him! Allah ﷻ helped them by granting them certain tools. Being a role model and guide for all of humankind is not an easy task. Every Prophet and Imām ؑ was persecuted by people around them who wanted to seek power for themselves; or called names by the arrogant. However, even in replying to the worst of people, they would respond back to them with the utmost kindness and best of manners. We will take a look at some of the qualities that these chosen guides of Allah ﷻ had.

PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE
Ṣabr (صبر) and Istiqāmah (استقامة)

All of the Prophets had the very noble characteristic of *ṣabr*, which means 'to remain patient, calm, and confident in the Power of Allah ﷻ when faced with problems, and continuing to try and achieve one's goal.' They also had perseverance (*istiqāmah)* which means 'to keep going and not give up despite facing great difficulties and obstacles.'

For example, imagine a sports team where all of the other players are trying to knock or push one person down. But that particular person does not let anyone push him down, and he keeps resisting, and never gives up, continuing to persevere and do his best. This is one example of *ṣabr* or patience. It is a proactive characteristic that all of the Prophets ؑ had; and even after the tough times that so many people gave them, no matter how many hardships they went through, they still remained firm in spreading their mission for the sake of Allah ﷻ.

SINCERITY
Ikhlāṣ (اخلاص)

Ikhlāṣ means 'utmost sincerity,' and this was another quality that was found in all of the Prophets ﷺ. All of their actions were purely for the sake of Allah ﷻ. What this means is that they did not want any kind of reward or gift for anything they did. They were doing it purely for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ and in obedience to Him. In the previous lesson, we mentioned their sincerity; and how in the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ quotes several Prophets ﷺ who said they do not want any reward from the people for their work, and their compensation is only from Allah ﷻ. They did not gain any money or compensation for their position as Prophets ﷺ, and often it made their lives much more difficult. One example from the Qurʾān is in regards to Prophet Hūd ﷺ who said to his people: "O my people, I do not ask you for any reward. My reward is only from the One who created me. Then will you not reason?" [4]

When Prophet Shuʿayb ﷺ went to the people of Madyan and told them to stop cheating other people out of their money, they laughed at him. They even told him that he was weak, and if it was not for his tribe and family, they would have killed him![5] What did Prophet Shuʿayb ﷺ have to gain from propagating to them? The one main thing that he achieved from all of his struggles was the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. Following the commands of the Almighty, Prophet Shuʿayb ﷺ was only trying to help the people of Madyan; but because they did not listen to the message of Allah ﷻ, they were eventually punished and destroyed.

INNER AND OUTER HUMILITY
Khushūʿ (خشوع) and Khuḍūʿ (خضوع)

Another common trait among all of the 124,000 Prophets ﷺ was that they were very humble. But what does it mean to be truly humble? Firstly, they were humble in their hearts before Allah ﷻ. Even though they had high spiritual positions, they still considered themselves to be low in front of Allah, the All-High. They not only had ***khuḍū*ʿ** which is 'outward humbleness,' but they also had ***khushū*ʿ** which means they had 'true inner humility and awe of Allah ﷻ' as well.

Secondly, they had ***tawaḍu*ʿ** which is 'humbleness in relation to people.' Their *tawaḍuʿ* toward people was a manifestation of their outer humility *(khuḍūʿ)* and inner humility *(khushūʿ)* in relation to Allah ﷻ. They did not consider themselves to be too good to do anything, and did not believe that certain groups of people were better than others. They knew that they were just humble servants of Allah ﷻ, and that everything they had been given was from Allah ﷻ. They ate and walked in the same places as everyone else.[6] They sat with others, and in fact they often spent time with the poorest members of society. They wore simple clothes and shoes, and always used their money to help the less fortunate. They never took advantage of other people, nor did they expect anyone to serve them. This is a true example of leadership—where you live among the people and just want to serve them, but do not expect anything at all in return.

KEY POINTS

- Allah ﷻ sent Prophets ﷺ and Messengers ﷺ as role models who were human beings like us so that they would be relatable examples that we can try to emulate. Allah ﷻ gave us messages through them, and also guided us through them.
- Prophets ﷺ are Divine guides who were humans like us, but they were granted special tools from Allah ﷻ to help them in their missions, which was to pass us messages and connect us to Allah ﷻ.
- We can learn many lessons from the Prophets ﷺ, their spiritual perfection, and their closeness to Allah ﷻ.
- Some of the qualities of the Prophets ﷺ were patience *(ṣabr)*, sincerity *(ikhlāṣ)*, inner humility *(khushūʿ)*, outer humility *(khuḍūʿ)*, and humbleness in relation to people *(tawaḍuʿ)*.

4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Hūd (11), Verse 51.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Hūd (11), Verse 91.
6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Furqān (25), Verse 20.

Activity 3.2c: Review Questions

Fill in the chart below.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE OF HOW WE CAN APPLY THIS TRAIT IN OUR OWN LIVES
ṣabr		
istiqāmah		
khushūʿ		
khuḍūʿ		
tawaḍuʿ		
ikhlāṣ		

1. Why did the Prophets of Allah ﷻ have such high statuses? (Hint: This lesson mentioned 3 reasons)

2. Why is it important that Allah ﷻ sent human beings to guide us? Why did He not send angels?

Activity 3.2d: Story Connection

DIRECTIONS: One of the ways that Ibrahim can break down the glass walls is by getting rid of his spiritual defects, negative qualities, and bad habits. In this lesson, we learned about three qualities that the Prophets ﷺ had. Think about their opposite qualities which would be negative traits to possess.

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Ṣabr: Patience/Perseverance	
Ikhlāṣ: Sincerity	
Khushūʿ and Khuḍūʾ: Inner and Outer Humility	

The story also mentioned that Saduq taught Ibrahim how to break down some of his glass walls. Choose two of the negative qualities above and write a story about Ibrahim breaking these walls down and how Saduq taught him the way to do so. Make sure to use practical advice that you and others can implement when trying to get rid of these negative qualities.

REQUIREMENTS

- The story should be at least two pages long, double-spaced, and written out by hand.
- You must have a planning page where you plan out your story before you write it.
- Make sure that spellings and grammar are correct!
- You need to include two negative qualities.

Rubric (Activity 3.2d)

Use the rubric rubric below to guide your work.

	1 **Ineffective**	2 **Somewhat Effective**	3 **Considerably Effective**	4 **Highly Effective**
Grammar	There are 5 or more grammatical mistakes.	There are 3-5 grammatical mistakes.	There are 1-2 grammatical mistakes.	There are no grammatical mistakes in the script.
Focus and Details	The topic and main ideas are not clear. Planning page is missing, or lacks sufficient details and organization for the story.	Main idea is somewhat clear, but lacks supporting evidence. Planning page is complete, but lacks many details.	The main idea is very clear, however supporting evidence and details are lacking. Planning page is complete, but should have provided a more organized outline.	There is a clear and focused main idea, supported by ample details and evidence. Planning page is complete with strong details and organization.
Voice/Intent	Author's voice or intent of writing is not apparent.	Author's voice or intent is somewhat apparent, but leaves the audience with many questions.	Author's voice or intent is strong with a clear purpose, but still leaves the audience with some questions.	Author's voice or intent and knowledge on the topic is very strong, and fully addresses all of the questions of the audience.
Accuracy	Content presented is not accurate or compelling. No negative qualities have been included.	Content presented contains much misinformation and lacks quality. Only 1 negative quality is included.	Content presented is mostly accurate, but still does not demonstrate quality work. 2 negative qualities are included, but they are still somewhat unclear.	Content presented is extremely compelling and accurate. Both negative qualities are included.
Teacher's Comments				

Ingredients of a Story (Activity 3.2d)

Think about your story and fill in each element below.

Working Title: _____

SETTING

Place(s):

Time(s):

CHARACTERS

Protagonist:

Antagonist:

Others:

PROBLEM

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

SOLUTION

Activity 3.2d: Story Connection (Continued)

Activity 3.2d: Story Connection (Continued)

3.3 From Prophethood to Imamate

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Understand why Divine Guides are needed after the demise of the final Prophet ﷺ.
- Learn about the events during the end of the Prophet's life and following his death.
- Analyze the role that the Imāms ﷺ played in understanding and following the religion.

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim woke up in a garden, found his purpose, and got some advice from an old man named Uncle Saduq on how to get past the glass walls. He just had a discussion with the wise man about the Divinely-appointed Prophets ﷺ, yet he was still quite curious about them.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM

Part 9: Continuing the Message

"Ibrahim, now do you see why these men were Divinely-chosen men?" Saduq asked.

"I think I do, Uncle Saduq. They were amazing individuals. They always obeyed Allah ﷻ, taught His message to the people, and never considered themselves to be great or anything significant in front of the Almighty. They knew that they were only servants of Allah ﷻ, but that was one of the things that made them so remarkable! They were human beings like us, so we can try to be like them, but they were also much more. They were Divinely-chosen leaders. Allah ﷻ sent them as examples and role models for us, but He also strengthened them so that they could help us, and deliver Allah's message to us. They only wanted to fulfill their responsibilities by teaching us the message, helping us, and guiding us toward Allah ﷻ. We can be like them to a certain degree, but in some ways they were quite different from us—they were given special things by Allah ﷻ. They had the highest levels of patience, sincerity, and humility. Even when people made fun of them, or threatened to kill them, they still persevered, and did whatever Allah ﷻ asked them to do. Everything they did was solely for Allah ﷻ, and in return for all that they did, they never wanted any reward from people. As well, they never gave up hope in Allah ﷻ; and their relationship with the Almighty was what made them such beautiful role models for us! I want to be like them! I want to improve my relationship with Allah ﷻ, and become as close to Him as I can by following the footsteps of the Prophets."

Ibrahim had learned so much about these Divine leaders. The next step was trying to become more like them by doing whatever they had done. If he could do that, then maybe he would become closer to Allah ﷻ as well. He knew that he could never completely be like a Prophet, but maybe he could be a little bit like them in their great manners.

Saduq smiled. Ibrahim had passed another test.

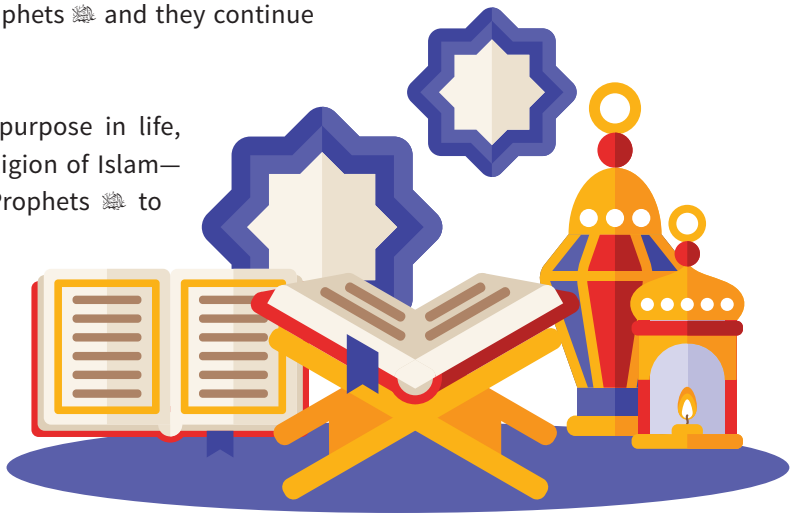
Uncle Saduq and Ibrahim talked for hours, but Ibrahim was still thirsty for more knowledge. He had just learned about the beautiful qualities of the Divinely-chosen guides—the Prophets ﷺ—who had been sent by Allah ﷻ to guide all of humanity, including Ibrahim. He was so grateful and thankful that Allah ﷻ had done this special favor for him and for everyone…but he could not shake off a sad feeling. The Prophets ﷺ had died long before he or even Uncle Saduq were born. What about everyone living in the world now? Did they not need a Divine guide during their lives? He knew that the stories of the Prophets ﷺ were important, and in some way their message had reached generations to come, but at the same time, how could it just have ended? Do human beings not always need a leader to guide them?

Allah ﷻ would never leave us without someone to explain things to us—He is way too Merciful and Kind to do that.

"Ibrahim, why have you gone so quiet all of a sudden?" Saduq looked at Ibrahim curiously.

"The thing is, Uncle Saduq, what about us? The Prophets ﷺ died long before we were born, and now we do not have a leader. I am so thankful that we have their messages and the Qurʾān, but don't we need a leader to still explain things to us? I feel like we are missing something very important. There has to be more to this guidance. Why do we not have Divine guides like the Prophets ﷺ anymore?"

Saduq smiled. "I think you are forgetting something, Ibrahim. We do have leaders that Allah ﷻ appointed to guide us after the Prophet ﷺ passed away! Allah ﷻ would never leave us without someone to explain things to us—He is way too Merciful and Kind to do that. Remember the 12 Imāms ﷺ? Let me tell you a little bit more about them because they are actually the inheritors of all of the Prophets ﷺ and they continue their message."



In order to become closer to Allah ﷻ and reach our purpose in life, Allah ﷻ gave us a clear set of guidelines through the religion of Islam—the final, complete, and best religion. He also sent Prophets ﷺ to communicate and explain these guidelines to the people. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was the final Prophet, and he completed the religion of Islam—the religion that all of the Prophets ﷺ before him taught to some degree. However, what happened after the 124,000 Prophets ﷺ that were sent? Do we not still need Divine guides after them? Who are our role models after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ left this world, and is no longer among the people?

Activity 3.3a: Recap and Rediscover

Up until this point we learned: (1) How there must be a God/Creator → (2) There can only be One God → (3) There must be a religion taught directly by God → (4) Islam is the only perfect religion → (5) We need Divine guides, Prophets ﷺ, to help us follow the true religion, Islam.

After the final Prophet ﷺ passed away, the guidance continued for humanity in the form of the 12 Imāms ﷺ. In order to prepare ourselves for a discussion on *Imāmah*, and to ensure that we have understood the logic behind our religion so far, we will pause here to prove each link in this chain of logic.

PROCEDURE: You will be divided into 5 groups, and assigned one link in the logic above that your group will have to prove. Using simple language and well thought out examples, explain your point (i.e. prove that there can only be One God). Use the criteria below to help structure your proof and presentation. Remember, your presentation should be engaging, and can be completed using any format (i.e. skit, infomercial, teacher/student role play, drawing pictures on the whiteboard, etc.). Use the rubric below to guide your work.

	1 **Ineffective**	**2** **Somewhat Effective**	**3** **Considerably Effective**	**4** **Highly Effective**
Graphics	Graphics do not make the topic easy to understand, and/or have no sources.	Most graphics relate to the topic, and most of them have a source cited.	Most graphics are related to the topic and make it easier to understand. All of the graphics have a source cited.	All of the graphics are directly related to the topic, and all of the borrowed graphics have a source cited.
Grammar	There are 5 or more grammatical mistakes.	There are 3-5 grammatical mistakes.	There are 1-2 grammatical mistakes.	There are no grammatical mistakes at all.
Islamic Principles / Accuracy	Content does not meet Islamic Principles.	Content meets Islamic Principles, but there is a lack of accuracy in the item description.	Content presented meets almost all of the Islamic Principles mentioned above, while maintaining accuracy of item description.	Content presented suits all of the Islamic Principles mentioned above, and maintains accuracy of item description.
Creativity	Project was distractingly messy and/or lacked design.	Project was presented creatively, but left the audience wanting more design and neatness.	Project was presented in an engaging manner, but lacked neatness.	Project was presented in an engaging and catchy way in terms of design, neatness, and layout.
Quality	Materials presented are not convincing or compelling.	Materials presented do not serve the intended purpose and lack quality.	Materials presented do not serve the intended purpose, but still demonstrate quality work.	Materials presented are extremely compelling and convincing.

We have to explain that: _____

_____

Format/Roles: _____

_____

_____

_____

Arguments/Points: _____

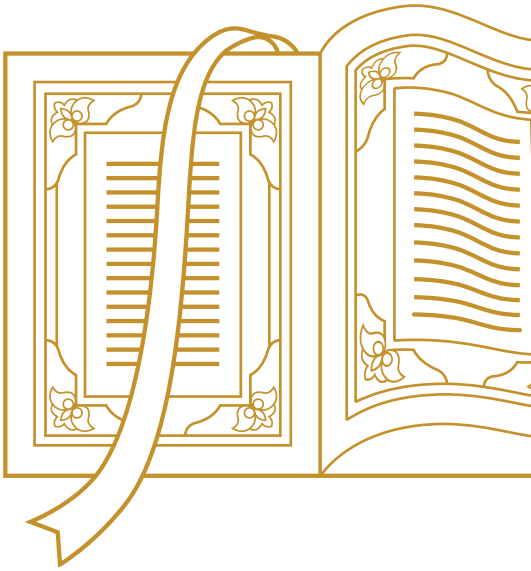
_____

_____

_____

_____

THE SHARĪʿAH IS COMPLETE



As we previously discussed, when Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ brought Islam, this *sharīʿah* (set of laws and guidelines) was the completion of the message of Islam for all humanity. When we discussed how Islam is the best and most complete religion, we learned how it is a complete system of life which teaches us everything that we need in order to become closer to Allah ﷻ. There is a famous narration *(ḥadīth)* that discusses this which says:

> "The *ḥalāl* of Muḥammad will be *ḥalāl* until the Day of Judgment, and the *ḥarām* of Muḥammad will be *ḥarām* until the Day of Judgment." [1]

What this means is that we will never need a new religion, or a new set of instructions or guidelines, because Islam is the best and most complete way of life until the end of this world.

However, even though we have the complete religion, we still need a person who is the closest to Allah ﷻ who can provide an explanation for the laws. We also require role models to help show us the way. So, even though we do not have new laws after the death of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ [unless it pertains to new issues which have not been addressed before, in which case the most learned scholars derive rulings on those from the teaching of the Prophets and Imāms], we still have Divinely-appointed leaders, known as the Imāms ﷺ, who help us apply the laws and guidelines.

ḤALĀL: permissible things

ḤARĀM: forbidden things

STOP AND REFLECT: Are there laws in western societies that are applied differently depending on various circumstances? Who is responsible in these societies for communicating and defining the application of different laws?

1 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, P. 58.

Activity 3.3b: Modern Day Connection

1. Work with a partner to brainstorm a specific law in the constitution that remained constant throughout history, but was applied in different ways based on various circumstances.

2. Try to think of an Islamic law that affects people differently in various scenarios—both historically and in the present-day.

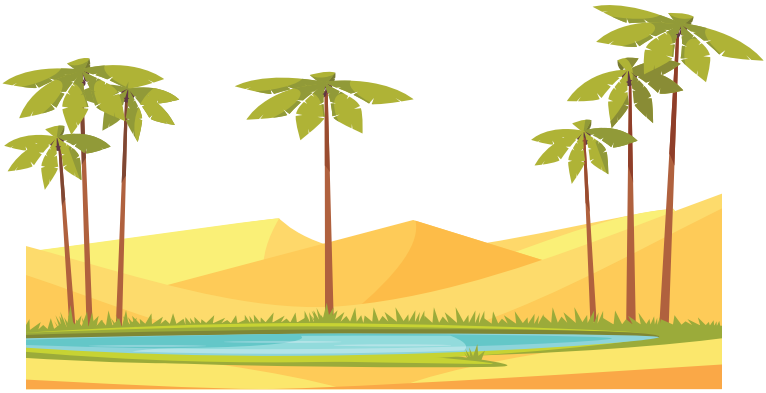
3. What resources can we use to understand how to apply Islamic laws when issues arise on a daily basis?

4. Create a flowchart to show how the resources we turn to today link back to Allah ﷻ, the Qurʾān, the Prophet ﷺ, and his Ahlul Bayt ؑ.

AFTER THE PROPHET ﷺ

After Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ passed away, the Muslims split over who they wanted to lead the Muslim community. Throughout the life of the Prophet ﷺ, he was extremely close to Imām ʿAlī ؑ and even raised him in his home when he was a young child. Imām ʿAlī ؑ was the first man to believe in the Prophet's message, and therefore he was the first Muslim man[2] even though he was young at that time. The Prophet ﷺ taught him everything that was revealed to him from Allah ﷻ, and Imām ʿAlī ؑ learned the complete religion of Islam and the entire interpretation of the Qurʾān directly from the Prophet ﷺ. Near the end of the Prophet's life, he gathered the Muslims who had accompanied him on the final pilgrimage *(Ḥajj)* near a place called Ghadīr Khumm, and told them that Imām ʿAlī ؑ was their leader and master, and that when he (meaning the Prophet) passed away, the Muslim nation had to hold on to two things: The Qurʾān and the Ahlul Bayt ؑ.[3] He raised the arm of Imām ʿAlī ؑ high up to the sky,[4] and on that day many Muslims gave their allegiance to Imām ʿAlī ؑ and congratulated him on the status that he had earned.[5] This was not the only time that the Prophet ﷺ made it clear that Imām ʿAlī ؑ was meant to be the Divine guide after he passed away;[6] rather he had made this known on numerous occasions. The job of Imām ʿAlī ؑ was to guide and lead the Muslims, and explain, clarify, and continue the message of Islam that had been sent.

However, when Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ passed away, the Muslims became divided, and some appointed the leader that they wanted instead of following what the Prophet ﷺ had said. While he was being buried, a few influential individuals gathered together and decided that Abū Bakr would now lead the Muslim nation. They believed that there was no need for a Divinely-appointed leader, and decided that they could just choose the new leader themselves. One of the reasons for this was because some of them felt that the Qurʾān and the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ *(Sunnah)* were enough of a guide, and the Muslims just needed a political leader without the same special spiritual qualifications that a Prophet had. Others acted out of jealousy, not wanting the Prophethood *(Nubuwwah)* and the Leadership *(Imāmah)* to be from the same family of Banī Hāshim. Another group had special grievances against Imām ʿAlī ؑ because he had fought against, and at times, killed their relatives who were enemies of Islam in previous battles. Some just knew that they would not be able to tolerate the strict justice and fairness of Imām ʿAlī ؑ—who never compromised on the truth.



This group of Muslims who chose their own leader, and did not accept Imām ʿAlī ؑ as the appointed leader by Allah ﷻ, later on came to be known as the Sunnīs (or the Ahlus Sunnah). The majority of Muslims were pressured into paying allegiance to Abū Bakr, and he became the *"khalīfah"* (caliph)—or political leader of the Muslims. Imām ʿAlī ؑ and Sayyidah Fāṭimah ؑ informed people that what they were doing was incorrect and not what Allah ﷻ wanted, but very few individuals supported them. Unfortunately, most people decided not to fight for, or even uphold, this Divine command. When Imām ʿAlī ؑ saw that the majority of the people did not want to follow him, he did not force them, even though he knew they were wrong. He did not want the Muslim community to become vulnerable due to being disunited. However, he and the other Divinely-appointed Imāms ؑ continued to guide the people, even though they were not acknowledged or obeyed as their leaders. They did this by being exemplary role models, and educating the people with the correct teachings of Islam.

Even though they did not have the political power that Allah ﷻ wanted them to have and had appointed for them, the Imāms ؑ always helped the Muslim nations and guided them.

We always need a role model and leader who has the highest spiritual qualifications so that they can guide and lead us to becoming as close as we can to Allah ﷻ, and help us practice all of the teachings of Islam correctly. Furthermore, we always need that connection and access to Divine Knowledge. The Imāms ؑ are that connection to Allah ﷻ and Prophethood, and all of the knowledge which is necessary for our guidance. This is the role of the Imāms ؑ, and is known as the concept of Imamate (*Imāmah*).

2 Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl ʿAbī-Ṭālib*, Vol. 2, P. 6; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad, *Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt*, Vol. 1, P. 84.
3 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, P. 294.
4 Muḥammad Neyshāboori, *Rowḍat al-Wāʿezīn*, Vol. 1, P. 9; Sayyid Ibn Ṭawūs, *Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl*, Pp. 454 and 456.
5 *Rowḍat al-Wāʿezīn*, Vol. 1, P. 350.
6 Ḥanbal, Aḥmad ibn, *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. 4, P. 437.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why would having an elected political leader serve as a guide for religious issues not be sufficient and be problematic?

THE DIVINE GUIDES

The group of Muslims who believe that the Divine leaders were appointed by Allah ﷻ to guide humanity after Prophethood was completed are the Shīʿahs. Allah ﷻ designated the system of Imamate *(Imāmah)* after Prophethood *(Nubuwwah)*, thus we have 12 Imāms ﷺ as our Divine leaders after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ—beginning with Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and ending with Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ—who hold the highest rank among the people. They are not Prophets, but have been specially chosen by Allah ﷻ, and were bestowed with immaculateness *(ʿiṣmah)* and special Divine knowledge. Although they do not directly receive any revelation *(waḥy)*, they have access to the knowledge that the Prophets ﷺ had, and receive inspiration *(ilhām)* from Allah ﷻ. As well, the Imāms ﷺ do not bring any new laws from Allah ﷻ, but they implement, teach, and guide us to follow the perfect religion brought by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

As mentioned earlier, the Prophet ﷺ himself told people about the important role of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. He said this on many occasions, including in Ghadīr Khumm where he introduced Imām ʿAlī ﷺ as the leader of the Muslim nation after him.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "I am leaving behind among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah, and my family, the Ahlul Bayt. The All-Aware, Subtle in Knowledge (Lord) has informed me that they will not separate until they return to me at the Pond (in Paradise)." Then he took the hand of (Imām) ʿAlī ﷺ and said:

"Whoever I am his leader *(mawlā)*, then ʿAlī is his leader *(mawlā)*." [7]

Here, the Prophet ﷺ explained that he is leaving behind two very weighty (i.e. valuable) resources: The Qurʾān and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, and that these two go together and will jointly guide the Muslim nation until the Day of Judgment. He then mentioned that whoever follows these two resources will always remain on the right path! This *ḥadīth* has been recorded in both Sunnī and Shīʿah books.

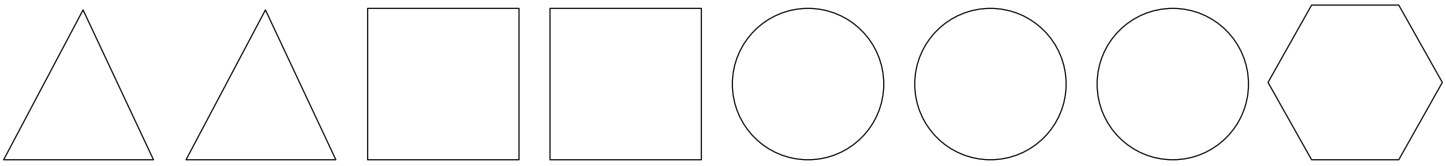
After the Prophet ﷺ gave this sermon, Allah ﷻ revealed one of the final verses of the Qurʾān, and said that it was on this day that He has "Perfected your religion for you" and that He "completed [His] favor upon you"—all of humanity, and "approved Islam as [the true] religion." [8]

From this event, the Prophet's words, and the revelation of this verse, one can see that *Imāmah* is a very important part of Islam. In fact, it is so important that Islam was complete only **after** Allah ﷻ introduced the concept of *Imāmah*.

7 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, P. 27.
8 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Māʾidah (5), Verse 3.

Activity 3.3c: Taking Perspectives

In the space below, create an image/drawing using two triangles, two squares, three circles, and one hexagon. After you complete your drawing, share it with at least two people and then answer the questions below.



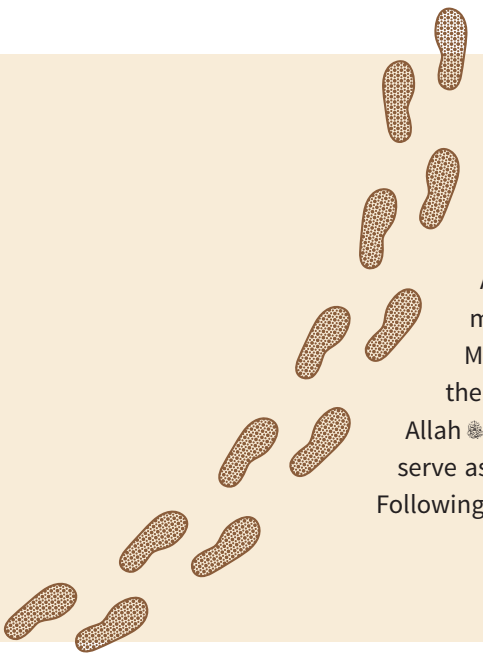
Activity 3.3c Taking Perspectives (Continued)

1. How is it that despite having the same base instructions, everyone's drawing is different?

2. What does this tell us about guidance?

3. If the shapes in the instruction represent Prophethood and the Qurʾān, what was missing to ensure everyone had the same successful outcome?

4. How does Allah ﷻ ensure that people are all aware of not only the basics of religion, but also how to apply them in one's life in order to ensure success in this world and the hereafter?



CONCLUSION

It is clear that Divine guides play a significant role in helping us become closer to Allah ﷻ. Without these leaders, we would not have the proper guidance on how to make good choices, or follow the commands of Allah ﷻ completely. After Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ revealed the final religion of Islam, the Imāms ؑ were appointed as the Divinely-chosen leaders who would continue to explain the message and religion of Allah ﷻ. They teach us about Islam, and help us remain steady on the right path. They also serve as role models, and help guide and teach us to become spiritually closer to Allah ﷻ. Following in their footsteps is like following in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ toward Allah ﷻ.

Activity 3.3d: Review Questions

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. The following verse was revealed on the Day of Ghadīr. What does it tell us about *Imāmah*?

   ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِى وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ ٱلْإِسْلَـٰمَ دِينًا

   Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion.[9]

2. Shīʿahs and Sunnīs have different beliefs in regards to *Imāmah*. What is the difference, and why do the Shīʿahs believe in the necessity of having Divinely-appointed Imāms ﷺ after the death of the Prophet ﷺ?

3. What happened after the Prophet ﷺ died? What did Imām ʿAlī ﷺ do, and why did he not take his right of becoming the caliph *(khalīfah)*?

4. Why do we need Imāms ﷺ after the Prophets ﷺ?

5. What is the difference between a Divinely-appointed leader and a leader that the people choose?

6. If the concept of *Imāmah* is a requirement of religion and plays such a big role in our belief system, how can we still use this resource and remain connected to the Imām of our time عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف during his occultation?

KEY POINTS

- Islam is a complete religion and way of life, and the Prophet ﷺ taught this final religion in which those things that are forbidden *(ḥarām)* and permissible *(ḥalāl)* will last until the Day of Judgment.
- Even though the religion has not changed and will not ever change, we still need a Divine guide who can help explain the religion to us, guide us, and be our role model.
- This need is fulfilled through the concept of *Imāmah*, in which Allah ﷻ appointed 12 Divine Imāms ﷺ, who are the inheritors of the Prophets ﷺ.
- Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ—as ordered by Allah ﷻ—appointed Imām ʿAlī ﷺ as the leader before he passed away (as well as on many other occasions before that); but after the Prophet ﷺ died, many Muslims thought they could appoint their own leader.
- The Imāms ﷺ are immaculate, free from any sins; and they have access to Divine Knowledge.

9 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Māʾidah (5), Verse 3.

3.4 Immaculateness (ʿIṣmah)

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Explore the different types of *ʿiṣmah.*
- Understand why the Divine guides need to be immaculate and free from sins *(maʿṣūm).*
- Discover the characteristics and mindsets that lead up to *ʿiṣmah.*

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim, after waking up in a garden and solving puzzles with his intellect and innate nature, meets an old man named Saduq. Saduq tells him about the importance and necessity of a Divine leader, and begins to describe the qualities of these leaders to him. After thinking about these attributes for a while, Ibrahim has more questions.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM
Part 10: Our Perfect Guides

Ibrahim and Saduq sat down on the grass to rest for a little while. Ibrahim exhaled a sigh of relief. With Saduq by his side—showing him the way to the Divinely-chosen guides and telling him about their teachings—Ibrahim knew that he could reach the other side of the glass walls soon, and that his thirst would soon be quenched. He was so grateful for the mercy that Allah ﷻ had shown him throughout this entire journey, especially by informing him about the Divinely-appointed leaders. He thought about all of the things that Saduq had told him, especially about the qualities and characteristics of the Prophets ﷺ and their beautiful relationship with Allah ﷻ. All of a sudden, a question appeared in Ibrahim's mind. It made him uncomfortable, and he was itching to ask Saduq about it.

"Uncle Saduq, can I ask you a question? I know that the Prophets ﷺ are our role models, but did they not make mistakes like us? Like Prophet Ādam ﷺ and Prophet Yūnus ﷺ both disobeyed Allah ﷻ and were then punished, right? Does that mean our role models do not have to be perfect after all?"

Saduq smiled. He had the same question when he was Ibrahim's age, and it had bothered him for a long time.

"That is a great question Ibrahim! You have probably heard that the Prophets ﷺ and the Imāms ﷺ are *maʿṣūm* which means they are immaculate and free from any sins, and have the quality of *ʿiṣmah* such that they do not sin or break the laws of Allah ﷻ. This is definitely true. But what about the stories which we have heard where these same Prophets did not do what Allah ﷻ wanted them to do? It will take some time for us to talk through the answer to this.

I want you to think about this in a different way. Imagine that you are the best basketball player on your team at school. Every day, your teacher gives you extra lessons after school to help you become even better. But then, when you are playing in a game, you decide not to apply the special dribbling skills that your teacher taught you. It is not 'against the rules of the game,' and you are still the best basketball player on the team, but you chose to do something that was not the best option.

Think about this in regards to the concept of *ʿiṣmah*. The Prophets 🕋 were at the highest spiritual status, and they were the best—there is no doubt about this. Allah 🕋 knew they were going to be like this even before the time they were born because He is *Al-ʿAlīm*, the All-Knowing. Therefore, He granted them a special type of gift called *ʿiṣmah* which is a type of protection, almost like an extra type of training. With this, these Divine guides could see the reality of this world very clearly. They comprehended how dirty sins are, so they were not even tempted to sin! They also had many more responsibilities because of their great status, and Allah 🕋 expected the best from them—better than anyone else. But sometimes, even the best player on the team may not necessarily choose 'the best option' that Allah 🕋 would have wanted them to pick. That is the type of 'mistake' that Prophet Ādam 🕋 and Prophet Yūnus 🕋 made. It was not really a sin though, was it? Think about it. Prophet Yūnus 🕋 just left the town that he was in. Is that a sin? Did he break any of the laws of Allah 🕋?

Activity 3.4a: Figuratively Speaking

Saduq used the metaphor of a basketball player above to explain the actions of Prophets 🕋 such as Prophet Ādam 🕋 and Prophet Yūnus 🕋. How does this metaphor parallel the actions of the Prophets 🕋? For each of the metaphorical phrases below, identify what Saduq was implying about either Prophet Ādam 🕋 or Prophet Yūnus 🕋, and what each portion of the metaphor is really discussing.

METAPHOR	REFERRING TO EITHER PROPHET 🕋
"Best basketball player"	
"Special skills"	
"Rules of the game"	
"Chose to do something that was not the best option"	

Ibrahim smiled. “You are right! Now that I think about it, he did not sin. So is he still considered to be immaculate and free from sin *(maʿṣūm)*? The Prophets ﷺ just have a higher standard because they are already better than everyone else spiritually, and Allah ﷻ has given them extra training, so He expects the best from them.”

“That is exactly right, Ibrahim! In Arabic, this is called ***tark al-awlā***, which means that they ‘did not choose the best of two permissible options.’ However, they did NOT sin, so this does not affect the fact that they are still free from sins. It is really important for our role models and Divine guides to be immaculate *(maʿṣūm)*. Why do you think this is?”

STOP AND REFLECT: Why is it important that our role models and Divine guides should be *maʿṣūm*? What would be the drawback of having leaders who commit sins and are not *maʿṣūm*? How would this impact our relationship with them and their guidance?

Ibrahim paused and thought deeply. If they sinned and their judgment was not correct, then nobody would trust them or follow them. If they lied about the message of Allah ﷻ, then everyone would be misguided! Allah ﷻ has conveyed to people, including Ibrahim, to become like the Prophets ﷺ and the Divine guides that He appointed. Why would Allah ﷻ command human beings not to sin, but then order them to follow people who sinned? It just does not make any sense for Allah ﷻ to tell them to become like those people who were not free from sins! Uncle Saduq was right, Ibrahim concluded: The Prophets ﷺ and Divinely-chosen guides were sinless and perfect, but sometimes they did not choose the **best** option. That was totally different from sinning. Uncle Saduq also explained to Ibrahim that while most of the Prophets ﷺ had sometimes not chosen the best option, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and his Ahlul Bayt ﷺ **always** chose the best possible option, and they never committed any *tark al-awlā*.

STOP AND REFLECT: Read the verse of the Qurʾān below which discusses Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. How does this verse show the importance of *ʿiṣmah* in a Divine guide? Why would this verse be revealed, and—what do you think is being communicated to the people here?

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ ۝ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْىٌ يُوحَىٰ ۝

Nor does he speak from his own whim. It is not but a revelation sent down to him.[1]

Ibrahim’s thoughts wandered, and soon another question came to his mind.

“Uncle Saduq, can we ever become perfect and *maʿṣūm* like the Divinely-chosen guides?

Saduq smiled. Ibrahim was going to break his glass walls in no time!

“You can, Ibrahim, but it is not that easy. We can all become partly *maʿṣūm*. There are certain sins that we have become experts at avoiding, so in that aspect we are *maʿṣūm* for those specific sins. Think of actions like running on a highway against the oncoming traffic, or drinking from sewage water. Would you even think about doing such awful things? Of course not! Committing any actions that can cause you harm is a sin, so in a way you are *maʿṣūm* when it comes to these. Sometimes, we have a certain level or degree of *iṣmah* for specific sins that we have become really successful at avoiding. In fact, there are some scholars and other people who have worked on themselves so much that they no longer sin. That is why we say that the Divine guides are our role models. We can become **like** them, but not exactly though!”

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Najm (53), Verses 3-4.

Activity 3.4b: Rapid Reflection

Take a moment, independently, to think about any sins that you have never committed which you are *maʿṣūm* in regards to.

Write a list of two sins that you commit intentionally or unintentionally (i.e. praying Fajr after its specified time, arrogance, talking ill of other people, etc.), and brainstorm some ways to strive for *ʿiṣmah* in regards to these sins.

SIN	WAYS TO STRIVE FOR ʿIṢMAH

All of this made sense to Ibrahim, and he was excited to follow in the footsteps of the Immaculate beings *(Maʿṣūmīn)*. Ibrahim and Saduq smiled as they walked through the garden, and Ibrahim broke some more of his glass walls. Everything was serene, until all of a sudden, the sound of a large siren filled the garden, and everything went pitch black.

The Divine guides are our connection to Allah ﷻ. They communicate messages from Allah ﷻ, and are also role models who show us how to live our lives in the best possible way. Furthermore, they explain our religion in detail to us and help us understand it properly so that we know how to get closer to Allah ﷻ. By knowing what we are supposed to do, we can make good choices with sincere intentions for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, and reach perfection by becoming as close as we can to the Almighty.

In the previous lesson, we learned that we have two main types of Divinely-chosen guides: Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ. They have certain tools and qualities given to them by Allah ﷻ that qualify them to be our leaders. One of these tools is ***ʿiṣmah*** (عصمة) which means 'immaculateness, impeccability, and faultlessness or free from committing sins.' In this part of the story, Ibrahim learned a little about *ʿiṣmah*, and we will learn more about it as well.

TARK AL-AWLĀ: refraining from the better; not chosing the best of two permissible options, but it is not a sin

ʿIṢMAH: immaculateness, impeccability, and faultlessness or free from committing sins

WHAT IS ʿIṢMAH?

What does it mean for someone to be ***maʿṣūm*** (معصوم), or impeccable and faultless? In the story, Saduq explained that the Divine guides are *maʿṣūm,* meaning that they never sin or disobey Allah ﷻ because they know the reality of the dirt and filth of sins. What we might be wondering though, is how does that happen? When a person has strong ***maʿrifah*** (deep understanding), it strengthens one's *īmān* (faith), and this leads to ***yaqīn*** (complete certainty). Due to this complete certainty, a person's soul is so strong that one does not go toward sins. In fact, they do not even think about sins!

As a result of their strong faith, deep understanding, and complete certainty, the Divine guides truly understand the ugliness of sins, and because of that, they want nothing to do with them and always stay as far away from them as possible.

As an example, imagine that you are starving, but the only thing around you is a dead, rotting animal, and eating it would only make you very sick. Would you eat it, or even go close to it? Probably not, because the idea of that is very disgusting and sickening. Similarly, the idea of sinning is way too repulsive for the Immaculate Beings *(Maʿṣūmīn)* to even think about because they see the true reality of sins.

In this lesson, we have translated *ʿiṣmah* as sinlessness, or free from sins. Others have translated it as inerrancy, impeccability, faultlessness, or infallibility. They are all referring to the same thing, which is the Arabic word *ʿiṣmah*.

Activity 3.4c: Rapid Reflection

Revisit your list from the first Rapid Reflection. Now that we know that the first step to *ʿiṣmah* is *maʿrifah* which is a deep understanding, how might you alter your plan of action for your list of two sins? Think of a few sources which you can turn to in order to gain a deeper understanding about the harms of the sins on your list, to help you understand why it is important to avoid committing them.

SINS	ALTERED WAYS TO STRIVE FOR ʿIṢMAH	SOURCES TO GAIN A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING TO HELP YOU

WHY MUST OUR DIVINE GUIDES BE IMMACULATE (MAʿṢŪM)?

STORY CONNECTION: In the story, Ibrahim thinks a little bit about why it is important to be *maʿṣūm*—free from sins, immaculate. We know that Allah ﷻ, in His infinite Wisdom, decided that the Divinely-chosen guides would be a bridge and connection between us and Him. Thus, these Divine leaders need to be able to truly guide and connect us to Allah ﷻ, and to teach us His true message. In order to do this, they cannot be among those who commit any sins, nor make a single mistake.

MAʿṢŪM: immaculate and free from any sins

YAQĪN: complete certainty

MAʿRIFAH: deep understanding

Think about it—how can we follow someone if they are making mistakes, or sinning and disobeying Allah ﷻ? That would mean that we could never be sure if what they are telling us is the true message of Allah ﷻ or not, and we would not really know what Allah ﷻ wants from us. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ tells us to obey the Divinely-chosen guides completely. He says:

> "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those who have been given authority [the Imāms] from among you."[2]

In other places in the Qurʾān where Allah ﷻ tells us about obedience to others, He makes sure to put a condition on it. For example, with regards to our parents, He tells us to obey them, but not when they tell us to do something wrong.[3] However, with the Divinely-appointed guides, the obedience does NOT have any conditions, which means that we must always obey them, and this is because they are immaculate and free from committing any sins *(maʿṣūm)*!

There is no room for error because we only have this one life to live, and a limited amount of time to reach our purpose. Allah ﷻ has commanded us who to follow, and He strengthened those individuals with a special type of immaculateness *(ʿiṣmah)* so that they are completely sinless and we can follow them. Simply put, because we are human beings who are prone to committing sins, we need someone who faces the same temptations as us, but does not commit any sins to guide us and teach us how to reach perfection.

2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Nisāʾ(4), Verse 59.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Luqmān (31), Verse 15.

KEY POINTS

- *ʿIṣmah* (عصمة) means immaculateness or being free from sins, and it is a special tool that the Divine guides have been blessed with by Allah ﷻ. They are *maʿṣūm* (معصوم) which means that they are immaculate, never sin, are completely faultless, and perfect.
- In order for us to completely follow someone, they need to be *maʿṣūm* so that we do not have any doubts in them, and know that they did not make any mistakes or errors.
- With hard work and sincere efforts, we too can become *maʿṣūm* in certain areas and protect ourselves from sins.

IMMACULATENESS (ʿIṢMAH) AND US

We know that the Divine guides are our role models, but they are even more special because they are also *maʿṣūm*. A question may arise: is it possible for us to reach *ʿiṣmah* as well? The good news is that we can also reach a certain level of *ʿiṣmah*. There are two types of *ʿiṣmah*: general immaculateness *(al-ʿiṣmah al-ʿāmmah),* and specific immaculateness *(al-ʿiṣmah al-khāṣṣah)*. General *ʿiṣmah* is something that all of us can reach to some level, whereas specific *ʿiṣmah* is exclusive for the Divinely-chosen guides as a special type of merit that Allah ﷻ has granted them.

GENERAL IMMACULATENESS (Al-ʿIṣmah al-ʿĀmmah)

This is a general kind of *ʿiṣmah* that is accessible to everyone. If we protect ourselves from certain sins, repent for our former mistakes and Allah ﷻ forgives us, then we can also become *'maʿṣūm'* to a certain level. For example, you might have perfected yourself by staying away from the sin of drinking alcohol; so in this regard, you could say that you are *'maʿṣūm'* when it comes to this specific sin because you have truly understood why you should stay away from it, and you do not even find it tempting to go near any alcoholic drinks. Unfortunately though, we are not like this with all sins, so our level of *ʿiṣmah* is quite limited.

SPECIFIC IMMACULATENESS (Al-ʿIṣmah al-Khāṣṣah)

This is a special and specific kind of *ʿiṣmah* (sinlessness or perfection) that is found only in all of the Prophets ﷺ, the 12 Imāms ﷺ, and Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ ﷺ. It is a special gift that has been granted by Allah ﷻ to these individuals. Since Allah ﷻ is *Al-ʿAlīm* (the All-Knowing), before these individuals were born, He knew that the Divinely-chosen guides would never sin or go against His commands. He further strengthened them from the start with special tools so that they could see the reality of sins and never be tempted toward them. This is a special type of *ʿiṣmah* that is required for them to be able to successfully guide us, and so that we can fully trust them with all of our hearts.

Occasionally, some of the Prophets ﷺ chose the second best option—not the best—when they performed something. This is called *tark al-awlā* (refraining from the better) and it means that the Prophets ﷺ chose the less perfect of two options, but it was not a sin at all. They were held to higher standards, and had elevated positions.

CONCLUSION

As we can see, *ʿiṣmah* plays an important role in why we should follow and obey the Divine guides. We can trust whatever it is that they say or do, and know that we will be okay because Allah ﷻ has strengthened and helped them with the gift of immaculateness. Even though we cannot become as great as the Divine leaders are, there is still a certain level of sinlessness that is available to us, and we need to work toward improving that. We should continuously strive on this path to Allah ﷻ by doing whatever is compulsory *(wājib)*, staying away from whatever is forbidden *(ḥarām)*, and always trying our best to fulfill our responsibilities toward Allah ﷻ.

Activity 3.4d: Review Questions

1. What three steps can lead up to an individual disliking sins to the point of achieving *ʿiṣmah*? Explain each step in one sentence.

2. Provide three reasons why the Divine guides must be *maʿṣūm* based on the information in the lesson above, as well as your own logic.

3. How does Saduq explain the actions of the Prophets ﷺ who did not do what Allah ﷻ had asked of them? What is the Arabic term for this explanation?

4. Identify the two types of *ʿiṣmah*. What type of *ʿiṣmah* are we capable of, and how can we attain it?

5. If believers need sinless guides to follow in order to understand the religion, then why did Allah ﷻ not just send down angels to guide us?

3.5 An Introduction to the Noble Qurʾān

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Understand the power and purity of the Noble Qurʾān.
- Explore proofs about the authenticity of the Qurʾān.
- Learn how to handle, read, and apply the Qurʾān in our daily lives.
- Analyze different lessons taught in the Qurʾān.
- Appreciate the Scientific miracles in the Qurʾān.

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim woke up in a garden surrounded by glass walls, then he found out what his purpose in life is, and was happy to receive some guidance from a man named Saduq on how to get past the glass walls. Saduq and Ibrahim just discussed how Allah ﷻ appointed immaculate Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ—who were completely sinless—to guide all of humanity. Ibrahim still had so many questions. He understood the importance of Divinely-appointed leaders, but he wanted to understand theDivine words. Even after understanding the importance of our Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ, Ibrahim felt like he was still trapped within the glass walls.

He could not find his way out with the little knowledge that he had—he needed more guidance. He wanted to understand the words of Allah ﷻ that the Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ were sent to explain to us. He was so curious. *Couldn't we try that too? Wouldn't it bring us even closer to Allah ﷻ?* he thought to himself.

I have to ask Uncle Saduq, he thought.

"Let's go on another walk," Saduq suggested. "Ibrahim, Allah ﷻ did not just send us special guides to understand the world, He also gave us the Qurʾān, which goes hand in hand with our Divinely-appointed leaders—we would not be able to have one without the other.

"I know we also need the guidance of the Qurʾān but why are they so connected?" Ibrahim asked.

"The Noble Qurʾān has been sent to teach us about the reality of the world that we live in. To understand it, we need the guidance of our Divine leaders because alone, we are not capable of finding the true meaning of Allah's words just as we need a teacher to explain to us what a textbook says to apply concepts." Uncle Saduq replied.

WHAT IS THE QURʾĀN?

The Qurʾān is a Book that is the actual, exact words of Allah ﷻ that He revealed to His final Messenger, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, through the Angel Jibrāʾīl. Allah ﷻ would command Jibrāʾīl to deliver the words of the Qurʾān to the Prophet ﷺ gradually over a period of the last 23 years of his life. The Qurʾān is therefore a Divine Book that was sent by Allah ﷻ to guide all of humanity throughout their lives. It teaches us many things, some of which include the following:

- The best way to live in this world.
- How to gain the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, and avoid things that would cause His displeasure.
- Realities in relation to the hereafter.
- Other things that we cannot see or hear, such as the soul, angels, jinn, etc.

THE FIRST REVELATION

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was a Muslim (one who submits), and a true believer in Allah ﷻ throughout his entire life. He would often go to the cave of Ḥirāʾ to think and worship the Almighty Creator ﷻ. He used his time away from the people to think about things more clearly, and try to understand why people did what they did in the busy city of Mecca.

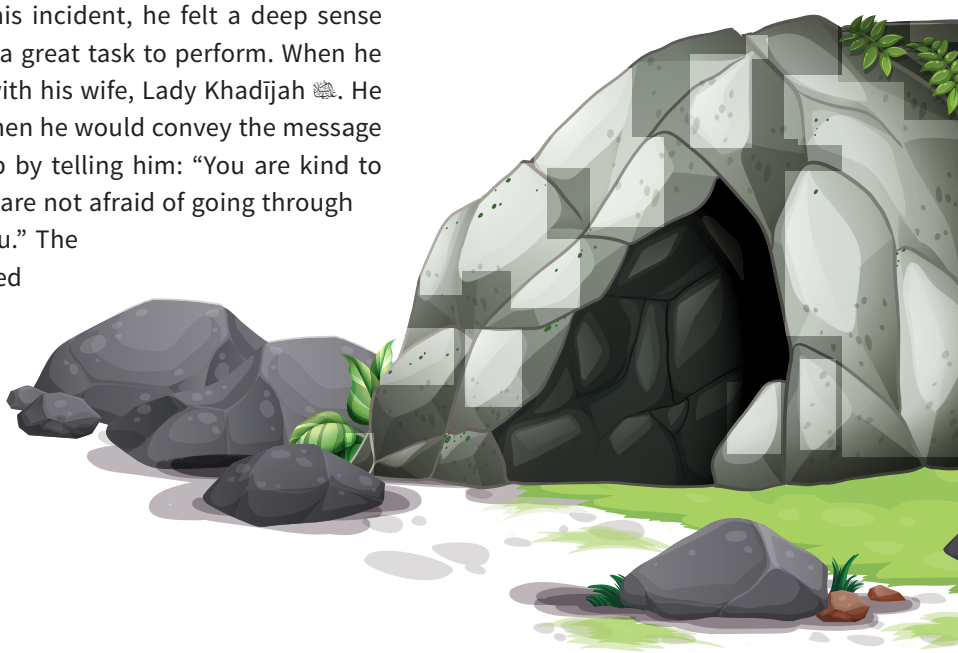
When the Prophet ﷺ reached forty years of age, he received the first revelation. While he was in the cave of Hirāʾ, Allah ﷻ sent Jibrāʾīl to him with the first words of the Qurʾān, which were:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝

"Read in the name of your Lord Who created."[1]

STOP AND REFLECT: Why do you think this was the first verse revealed? What does it tell us about the message of Islam?

Angel Jibrāʾīl asked the Prophet ﷺ to recite these words, and once the Prophet ﷺ did this, Jibrāʾīl told him: "You are the Messenger of Allah, and I am Jibrāʾīl."[2] When the Prophet was leaving the cave of Ḥirāʾ after this incident, he felt a deep sense of responsibility because he had been given such a great task to perform. When he arrived home, he discussed what had happened with his wife, Lady Khadījah ؓ. He was worried about how the pagans would react when he would convey the message of Allah ﷻ to them. Lady Khadījah ؓ tried to help by telling him: "You are kind to your relatives, you treat your guests well, and you are not afraid of going through hardships for the sake of Truth. Allah will help you." The Prophet ﷺ then felt very exhausted. He went to bed and asked his wife to cover him. While he was wrapped and covered in bed, he received the next revelation, asking him to begin spreading the message of Islam.[3]



1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96), Verse 1.
2 Rāwandī, Quṭb Dīn, *Al-Kharāij wal Jarāiḥ*, Vol. 1, P. 83.
3 Āyatullāh Jaʿfar Subḥānī, *The Message*, Ch. 11; ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 18, P. 95.

Activity 3.5a: Recreating Revelation

The story of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ receiving the first revelation is incredibly captivating, and makes us wonder what that would have felt like. In order to reflect on this experience more, you may choose one of the following activities to complete:

1. **SUMMARY:** Write a two paragraph summary of the event from the point of view of a fly on the wall in the Cave of Hirāʾ. Make sure your fly follows the Prophet ﷺ until he falls asleep!
2. **COMIC STRIP:** Create a ten square comic strip depicting the entire story. Be sure to portion out squares for the Prophet's time in the cave, as well as his time at home. *Note: Out of respect, the faces of the Prophet ﷺ and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ should be left blank, covered up, or depicted by a white light!*
3. **POEM:** Compose a 16 line poem describing the event. Be sure to have verses which discuss the cave, as well as his time at home. *Note: The poem can follow any format with any rhyming scheme.*

1. SUMMARY: Write a 2 paragraph summary of the event from the point of view of a fly on the wall in the Cave of Hirāʾ. Make sure your fly follows the Prophet ﷺ till he sleeps!

2. COMIC STRIP: Create a 10 square comic strip depicting the entire story. Be sure to portion out squares for the Prophet's time in the cave as well as his time at home. (Note: of course out of respect the faces of the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt ﷺ should be left blank, covered or have light!)

Activity 3.5a: Recreating Revelation (Continued)

3. POEM: Compose a 16 line poem describing the event. Be sure to portion out verses to discuss the cave as well at home. (Note: the poem can follow any format with any rhyme scheme.)

HOW CAN WE PROVE THAT THE QUR'ĀN IS THE WORD OF ALLAH ﷻ?

You might ask yourself: how can I prove to myself or to non-Muslims that the Qur'ān really is the Word of Allah ﷻ? Here are some of the main proofs to back this up:

1. When the Qur'ān was being revealed, people accused the Prophet ﷺ of making it up himself, so Allah ﷻ told the Prophet ﷺ to challenge them by asking if any of them could bring something similar to the Qur'ān.[4] If they could, then it was possible that the Qur'ān was the word of a human being such as the Prophet ﷺ. But if they could not, then it must be the Word of God. Of course, no one could write anything similar to the Qur'ān at that time; and even up until now, no one has ever been able to do such a thing.
2. The Qur'ān speaks about many topics such as justice, equality, human rights, business transactions, power of the intellect, chastity, and the pure teachings of faith—all of which were unknown to societies of the world at that time, and could not have been the product of human imagination.
3. Even though the Qur'ān is not a book of science, there are many verses in the Qur'ān that invite us to reflect about the wonders of Allah's creations in order to learn important lessons, such as the Power and Knowledge of Allah ﷻ, the stages that a fetus goes through in the womb of its mother, the reality of resurrection, and so much more.

WHY WAS THE QUR'ĀN REVEALED IN ARABIC?

The Noble Qur'ān was revealed to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in Arabic; and there are a number of reasons for this:

1. Arabic is a very eloquent language, and the Arabs were known for their brilliance in eloquence. The Qur'ān was revealed in this language because Allah ﷻ, the Exalted, wanted one of the major miracles of the Qur'ān to be its eloquence, so He revealed it in a language known for its articulateness.
2. The people whom Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ lived among were Arabs, thus it only made sense for the language of the Qur'ān to be Arabic.
3. There is a lot of depth to the Arabic language which cannot be found in any other language.

There are two important points to remember here:

1. The fact that we know the original language of the Noble Qur'ān, and have access to very early copies of the Qur'ān, means that we know exactly what Allah ﷻ revealed to His Prophet ﷺ. Other religions do not have this knowledge, and some of them do not even know the original language which their Book was written in.
2. The fact that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic does not mean that it is a Book only for Arabs. It is a Book of guidance for all of humanity—no matter what language a person speaks. However, it had to come in some language, and we already discussed the possible reasons why Allah ﷻ chose Arabic.

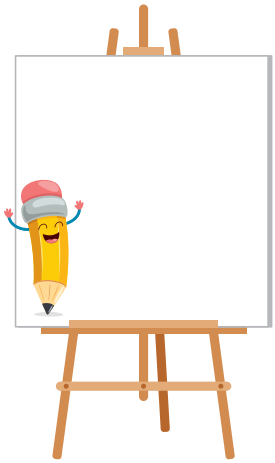
STOP AND REFLECT: If the entire religion—from the Qur'ān to *ḥadīth*—has been recorded in Arabic, then imagine how important is must be to learn this language?

4 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūnus (10), Verse 38.

Activity 3.5b: Translation Telephone

DIRECTIONS: The teacher is going to divide you into gender segregated groups of five. Form a circle and have the youngest person in your group be the first person in the telephone line. The teacher will give the first person in each circle a phrase, which will be a message that must be passed along the telephone line. The first person will whisper the message into the ear of the person on their left, and then each person will whisper it into the next person's ear until the last person. The last person will be asked to share the message that reached them. How accurately did the message pass from the first person—through the telephone of only five people—until the last person? Think about how translations of the Qurʾān would mimic this telephone—how might the true meanings of the Words of Allah ﷻ have been distorted (if they were in many different languages)? This shows the need of preserving the original form of the Qurʾān in one language—Arabic.

Activity 3.5c: Prophetic Pictionary



DIRECTIONS: The teacher is going to divide you into groups of three. Each group will need a piece of paper and a pencil. The teacher will provide a certain word to one person from each group which must be kept secret! Once the teacher says go, the person who was told the word must draw out clues on a piece of paper to give hints to their group members about the word that they were assigned. Each person will have one turn to be the designated person to draw. After everyone has had a turn, discuss how difficult it was to translate the teacher's word from spoken to pictorial communication.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What were some of the limitations that a person faced in this activity?

2. How might the translation of the Qurʾān mimic pictionary?

3. How might the true meaning of the Words of Allah ﷻ be distorted or altered due to language barriers?

STOP AND REFLECT: Translations of the Qurʾān are incredibly important resources, yet they differ quite a bit at times. What are the advantages of having translations readily available? What are the drawbacks of relying solely on translations to understand our religion? Do you think learning the Arabic language needs to be a priority for most Muslims?

THE QURʾĀN CONSISTS OF ĀYĀT (SIGNS)

Each verse or segment of the Qurʾān is called an *āyah.* The literal meaning of *āyah* is 'a sign.' The plural of *āyah* is *āyāt* (signs). This name has been given to the segments of the Qurʾān by Allah ﷻ Himself. This shows us that every single expression of the Qurʾān is a sign or miracle from Allah, the Exalted. We often translate *āyah* as 'a verse.'

STOP AND REFLECT: Why do you think each verse is called an *āyah* (a sign)?

There are two possible meanings for this:

- Each verse or expression—because it cannot be matched by people—is a sign that these are the Words of Allah ﷻ, and a sign of His Grandeur and Power.
- Each verse *(āyah)* gives us a sign or proof about Allah ﷻ, the message of the Prophet, the Hereafter, or other important things.

THE ETIQUETTE OF HANDLING THE QURʾĀN

In this part of the lesson, we will learn the most important rules for reading and handling the Noble Qurʾān. Since the Qurʾān is the Word of Allah ﷻ, we need to show a lot of respect toward it when we are handling or reading it. The actual Words of the Noble Qurʾān in Arabic can **only** be touched if one is in a state of ritual purity (having performed *wuḍū*, or *ghusl* if need be). This is an obligatory rule, and it is forbidden to touch it otherwise.

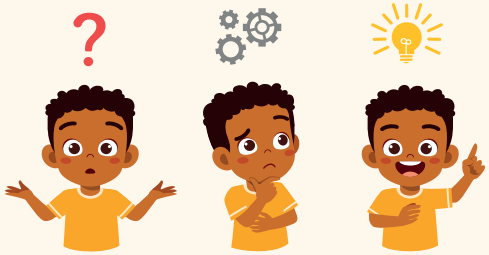
In addition, we should always begin the recitation of the Qurʾān by seeking refuge with Allah ﷻ from Satan, and then the Basmalah, by saying the following words:

أَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ
I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ
In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful.

Some of the other things that we should remember in regards to the Noble Qurʾān are:

1. It should be recited without rushing, and in a clear manner.
2. When the Qurʾān is being recited, one should listen attentively to it, and not talk or disrupt the recitation. This is especially if the Qurʾān is being recited in person, and not as a recording.
3. Do not leave the Qurʾān open and unattended, or in a place where it may be disrespected. Recite it regularly, and do not leave it unread on a shelf.
4. Worn-out pages of the Qurʾān, or paper with verses on it, must not be thrown out in the garbage. They should be maintained in such a way that they remain respected.



PUTTING THE MESSAGE OF THE NOBLE QUR'ĀN INTO PRACTICE

Even though we have learned some important rules about the Qurʾān so far, the most important one that we have to remember is that the Qurʾān is not just there for us to recite. It was sent to us as a guidance, so we must take lessons from it, and then put them into practice after reading it. So whenever we read an *āyah*, we should ask what it means for our own lives. If we really think and ponder over every *āyah*, then we will see that each one can make such a significant change to our lives.

Activity 3.5d: Qurʾānic Lessons

There are so many opportunities for learning in the Qurʾān! Let us do a quick hunt for a lesson in the Qurʾān.

DIRECTIONS: In groups of three, you will be assigned a short sūrah from the 30th juz of the Qurʾān. Read the sūrah in Arabic and English. After reading the sūrah, discuss at least two lessons that your group can learn from the Words of Allah ﷻ. Fill in the chart below as you discuss. For each lesson learned, be sure to have verses from the sūrah to help explain what you wrote.

Sūrah Number: _____

Sūrah Name in (Arabic): _____

_____

Sūrah Name (English): _____

_____

Summary of the Sūrah

Lesson 1	**Lesson 2**
Evidence from the Surah	**Evidence from the Surah**

Activity 3.5e: Turning to the Commentary (Tafsīr)

Each verse *(āyah)* of the Qurʾān has an apparent *(dhāhir)* meaning, and a hidden *(bātin)* meaning. In the first part of this activity, we explored the apparent *(dhāhir)* meaning of each chapter. At home, read the commentary or deeper explanation *(tafsīr)* of the short sūrah that you were assigned in order to explore more, and get an even deeper meaning of that chapter! Bring your findings to class tomorrow for everyone to discuss!

THE STORY OF FUḌAYL IBN ʿAYĀN

This is the story of a man who really put the words of the Qurʾān into practice. His entire lifestyle changed because of only one *āyah* in the Qurʾān. Fuḍayl was a gangster. He led a gang of thieves who would threaten people, hurt them, and rob them. Fuḍayl himself was very arrogant. He would simply walk up to people, and tell them that he will be coming to their house that night to rob them or hurt them. One day, he said this to a particular family, and that family became terrified because of this. At night, Fuḍayl got ready to rob them, so he waited outside of their house until it became completely dark. Then he began to jump over the fence. However, right at that moment, Fuḍayl heard the neighbor reciting this *āyah* of the Qurʾān:

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

Has not the time come for those who believe that their hearts should become humble to the remembrance of Allah, and what has come down of the Truth?[5]

When Fuḍayl heard these words, it suddenly overwhelmed him, and he realized how arrogant he had been. Right at that very moment, he decided to change his entire lifestyle. He jumped back over the fence and left the house without robbing it or hurting anyone. He never robbed or hurt anyone ever again, and in fact he became one of the most pious people in the history of Islam.

5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Hadīd (57), Verse 16.

STOP AND REFLECT: Can you remember a time when you had a moment of clarity like Fuḍayl? Have you experienced a moment in life which changed the way you acted, or made you realize that you needed to make better decisions?

We should try to ponder over the words of the Qurʾān, and not simply let them pass us by. We should try to apply them in our own lives as much as possible.

THE MESSAGE OF THE QURʾĀN

As we mentioned earlier, the most important aspect of our relationship with the Qurʾān is how we apply it in our lives. Let us look at some examples of practical messages in the Qurʾān, and examine how we can implement them within our day to day life.

Activity 3.5f: Expert Advice

Below are three different lessons from the Qurʾān. Your teacher will divide you into three groups. Each group will read one of the sections below as assigned by your teacher. Your group must become "experts" on that lesson! Once you have had time to read over the verse, organize your ideas, and discuss it with your group, you will then be split into new groups of three. You must teach your new group members the lesson that you studied, and listen to their explanation of the lessons which they studied. Do not be afraid to ask each other questions!

1. GOODNESS TO PARENTS

In many different verses of the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ orders us to be good to our parents. Here is one example:

فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ۝...

(Be good to your parents)…and do not even say 'ugh' (uff) to them, and do not be rude to them, and speak to them respectfully.[6]

In this *āyah* of the Qurʾān, we can see that:

- We are not even allowed to show the slightest rudeness or disrespect to our parents by saying something so small as *'uff'* (which in Arabic is an expression of frustration, disapproval, or irritation, and can be equivalent to "argh" or "ugh" in English). So just imagine if a person yells at their parents, or says something hurtful to them!
- We must always speak to our parents respectfully, no matter what the situation is.

One day, a man came to Imām as-Sajjād ؑ and told him that he had taken his mother to *Ḥajj*. He had carried her on his back the whole time as he went around the Kaʾbah, and walked from one mountain to the other. He had fed her, clothed her, and looked after all of her needs. He then said to the Imām: "Have I done my duty toward her?" The Imām ؑ replied: "You have not even made up for one of the pains she felt when she was giving birth to you."[7] Imagine then how much we have to do to repay our parents for all that they have done for us, and continue to do for us.

In another story, a man heard the Imām ؑ saying, "If a good child looks at his or her parents with love, they will get the reward of an accepted *Ḥajj*." The man was very surprised by this and said: "What if I look at them with love a hundred times during the day?" The Imām ؑ replied: "You will get that reward each time you look at them with love."[8]

STOP AND REFLECT: How can we respect and show love to our parents every day? How often do we perform good actions toward them? How does our relationship with our parents reflect our relationship with the Qurʾān and Allah ﷻ?

6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Isrāʾ (17), Verse 23.
7 Āyatullāh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīre Nemūnah*, Vol. 12, P. 80.
8 Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, Chapter on Goodness to Parents.

2. BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD BETWEEN BELIEVERS

Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ...
Surely, the believers are brothers (and sisters)...[9]

One of the themes in the Noble Qurʾān is that Muslims should treat each like brothers or sisters. Usually, we have a lot of love for our siblings. We might fight sometimes, but if they are sick or in trouble we worry a lot about them. We also sacrifice things for our brothers or sisters when they are in difficult situations. There is usually a lot of forgiveness between brothers and sisters. Our siblings may often do things that we are unhappy about or that hurt us, but we usually forgive them more or less. We should have a similar attitude toward our fellow believers; so the next time we are in situation where we have to make a decision about how to treat another Muslim, we should remember this verse from the Qurʾān, and apply this lesson in our lives.

If a fellow Muslim does something wrong to me or hurts me, I should think: "How would I react if this was my brother or sister?" If another believer is in desperate trouble, I should ask myself: "How would I help this person if they were my brother or sister?"

STOP AND REFLECT: Can you think of a time when a fellow Muslim treated you unkindly? How did you respond? Did you treat them like you would if they were your brother or sister?

There is a great example in the history of Islam about brotherhood and sisterhood between believers. The people in Mecca who had accepted Islam were oppressed in their hometown. Their homes and wealth were taken away from them, and they were often tortured in different ways. Eventually, they were able to migrate to the city of Medina, along with the Prophet ﷺ. The people of Medina were already Muslims and welcomed their new friends. The Meccans had nothing with them—they had to leave all of their wealth and property behind, while the people of Medina had their homes and businesses. The Prophet ﷺ established an amazing way for the people of Medina to share what they had with the people of Mecca, while also creating stronger friendships. The Prophet paired up one person from Medina with one person from Mecca, and declared them to be brothers. The individual from Medina was asked to share his home and his wealth with the individual from Mecca until the Meccan person managed to build himself up, and get a home and job to take care of him and his family.[10]

This is a great example of how believers treated each other as brothers—following the advice of the Qurʾān.

9 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (49), Verse 10.
10 Ibn Hishām, *As-Sīrah an-Nabawiyyah*, Vol. 1, Pp. 504-505.

3. USING OUR INTELLECT

The Qurʾān constantly reminds us to use our intellect and minds. The entire universe of creation with all of its miracles are lessons from Allah ﷻ, but only for those who use their intellect and reflect.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, there are signs for those who have intellect.[11]

The Qurʾān wants us to think things through, then make judgments based on evidence and sound reasoning, not based on what we feel like, what other people are doing, or what our friends or society at large expect us to do.

STOP AND REFLECT: What do we usually base our daily decisions on? Think about some of the decisions that you make on a daily basis surrounding food, scheduling, school, etc. What pushes you to choose one thing over another? Are your choices driven by Islam and logic, or by something else?

One of the best examples in the Qurʾān where people were asked to use their intellect is in the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ. People during the time of Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ used to worship statues that they had made themselves. Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ knew that this did not make sense, so he said to them:

قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحِتُونَ ۝ وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

Do you worship that which you [yourselves] have made. While it is Allah who created you and these things that you make?[12]

Even though his argument was logical and made complete sense, they did not listen to him. Then he tried another approach. He smashed the idols that the people of his town used to worship, and left only the biggest idol standing with an axe on its shoulder. When the people asked him what had happened, he told them that if the idols are really gods who communicate with their worshipers, then the big idol must have performed this action, and they should question the gods to find out more about it. Of course, they knew that their gods were lifeless and mute, and that Prophet Ibrāhīm was getting them to see that even the biggest idol was incapable of doing anything—speaking or defeating the other gods. They responded: "You know that these statues do not talk!" So Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ said to them: "So you worship these things instead of Allah, when these things cannot benefit you or harm you…then will you not think (or reason)?" [13]

11 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Āl ʿImrān (3), Verse 190.
12 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt (37), Verses 95-96.
13 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ (21), Verses 63-67.

Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ tried as much as he could to get his people to think. However, they had seen their fathers and grandfathers doing the same thing, so they did not want to change, even though they knew they were wrong. They would often say to him: "We will follow that which we found our fathers doing (worshiping)!" [14]

Their desires also overcame their intellect. They were used to this way of life, and made money from these statues, and set up their society around them. If they agreed with Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ, all of that would change, so they decided to ignore what their minds told them and continued to follow their desires.

STOP AND REFLECT: What motivated the idol worshipers to deny Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ? What different factors pushed them to keep on worshiping idols?

Do we not also have similar challenges? We sometimes see our friends doing certain things, and they pressure us to do the same things that they are doing, and without really thinking we copy them. They might encourage us to dress in a certain manner, or cut our hair in a particular way, or do dangerous or hurtful things because they are doing them. When we are in a situation like this, we have to stop and think. We have to think about the advantages and disadvantages of what we are about to do, and what could happen to us or other people if we carry out that action.

We have to always put our mind before our desire. No matter how much we might feel like buying those very expensive shoes, or teasing a kid at school, or being the class clown—we have to use our mind and see whether that desire is more important, or what our mind is telling us to do.

Following our desires can lead us to have many problems in life. Imagine always following the desire to watch TV and play video games, and ignoring our mind that tells us to study. We would end up always falling behind in our studies, and maybe even failing at school. Imagine following the desire to hit someone every time they make us angry, and ignoring our mind which tells us to solve the problem in a different way. We would probably end up getting expelled from school and even in trouble with the law one day. We have to learn to make our mind stronger than our desires so that we can be successful in life, and stay out of certain misfortunes. In any situation in life, we have to remember to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the things that we are choosing between by using our intellect. Then we must choose the one that is right, not the one that our desire is urging us to pick.

We have to learn to make our mind stronger than our desires

14 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 170.

SCIENTIFIC MIRACLES OF THE QURʾĀN

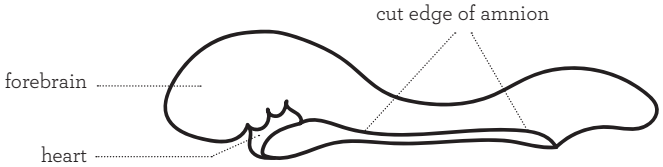
So far, we have discussed that the main proof that the Qurʾān is the Word of Allah ﷻ is that no one has ever been able to produce anything like it, and that it has never been changed throughout all of this time.

Another one of the proofs that the Qurʾān is the Word of Allah ﷻ is that it contains scientific miracles. The Qurʾān is not a science book, but sometimes when Allah ﷻ speaks about various wonders of His creation, He does so by presenting knowledge that no one at the time of revelation had discovered or knew anything about in relation to the physical universe and things within it.

One of the clearest scientific miracles of the Qurʾān is the way that it describes a small fetus growing inside of the womb of its mother. At that time when the Prophet ﷺ lived, people had no idea about how a baby grows inside of its mother's womb, or what stages it goes through; however, the Qurʾān gives a very detailed description about the stages of growth.

- The Qurʾān says that a baby is inside 'three layers of darkness.' Scientists have confirmed that there are three layers covering a baby if we were to look from the outside: the mother's abdominal muscles, the wall of the womb, and a membrane covering the actual baby.
- The Qurʾān says that the baby looks like a leech. Scientists have confirmed that a week after the baby is in the womb it actually does look like a leech.

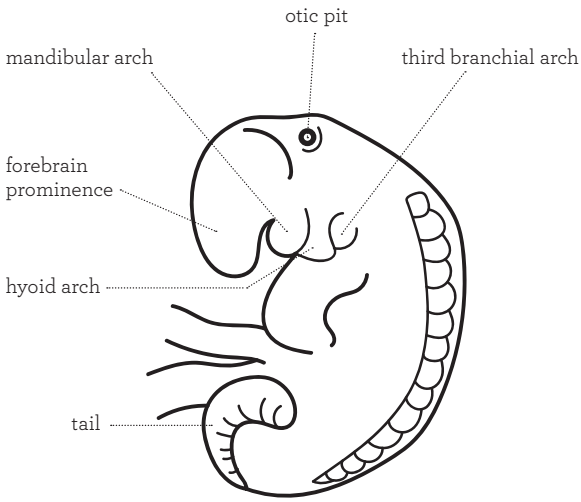
HUMAN EMBRYO



LEECH

- The next stage the Qurʾān describes is that the baby looks like a chewed up lump, and this has also been confirmed by scientists. The image below shows the embryo at week 5, measuring at approximately 2 mm, only slightly larger than a strawberry seed.

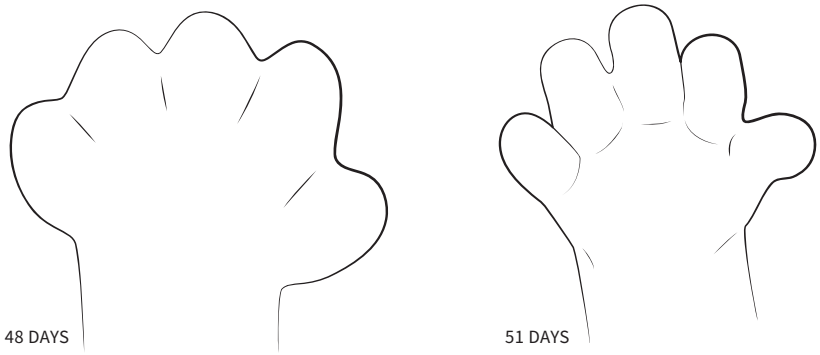
EMBRYO



- Then the Qurʾān outlines that the baby's bones are covered by flesh, and this is also what actually happens. A skeleton formed of young bone [made mainly of cartilage at 6-8 weeks] forms before recognizable muscle begins to wrap itself around this skeleton in a process called myogenesis.

Note how by just 7 weeks, the young skeleton is beginning to form knee and ankle joints!

The hand by day 48 [7 weeks] with a distinct shape formed by the embryo's early skeleton. Just 3 days later it begins to look much more recognizable!



And certainly We created humankind of an extract of clay, then We made it a small mixed-drop (nuṭfah) in a firm resting-place (the womb), then We made the seed a clot (a leech-like clot), then We made the clot a (chewed) lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the Best of the Creators.[15]

- Then the Qurʾān says that the fetus develops the ability to hear and see; and scientists have confirmed that a baby gets those senses in this exact order mentioned by Allah ﷻ.

"Indeed, We created human beings from the drop of a mixed fluid so that We may put them to test, and We endowed them with hearing and sight."[16]

VIDEO EXTENSION

The following video discusses some other important Scientific miracles found in the Noble Qurʾān.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypXqqdPrYQQ

15 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Muʿminūn (23), Verses 12-14.
16 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Insān (76), Verse 2.

Activity 3.5g: Review

1. Why are the expressions of the Qurʾān called signs *(āyāt)*? Provide two reasons.

2. Choose the correct answer below. The Qurʾān was revealed in Arabic, this means that:
   a. It is a book only for the Arabic speaking people
   b. It is a book for all of humanity, but it is in Arabic because this was the language of the people during the Prophet's time
   c. It is a book only for those people who can learn Arabic

3. The Qurʾān is the Word of _____.

4. Choose one of the lessons that we discussed from the Qurʾān. How can you apply it to your daily life?

5. The Prophet ﷺ was _____ years old when he received his first revelation from Allah ﷻ through Angel _____ in _____. The first verse revealed to him said _____
   _____.

6. How can we prove that the Qurʾān is the Word of Allah ﷻ? Explain at least one proof in your own words.

7. **True or False:** I can open and touch the words of the Qurʾān without *wuḍū* (spiritual ablution). _____

8. **True or False:** Fuḍāyl ibn Ayān was a great scholar who taught *tafsīr* (commentary) of the Qurʾān. _____

9. Choose the correct answer below. The Scientific miracles of the Qurʾān:
   a. Are the main miracles
   b. Are not the main miracles, but help us prove that the Qurʾān is the Word of Allah ﷻ
   c. The Qurʾān has no Scientific miracles

BONUS: What is your favorite verse *(āyah)* of the Qurʾān? Share it below and explain why you love it!

CHAPTER 4

Qiyāmah

4.1 The Necessity of the Day of Judgment (Qiyāmah)

4.2 The Mercy and Justice of Allah ﷻ

4.3 The Soul

4.1 The Necessity of the Day of Judgment (Qiyāmah)

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Recognize that this world is temporary and short-lived. We all know that we have a deadline coming up, which is the time of our death, and then the Day of Judgment.
- Understand that our Hereafter is a direct consequence or result of our actions in this world.
- Recognize that knowing more about, and thinking about the Hereafter is important to help us keep track of our lives.
- Explore how, without a Day of Judgment, the Justice of Allah ﷻ would be incomplete.

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim is a young boy who has been in a garden surrounded by glass walls for what feels like many days. His first objective was to find water, and along the way he solved many puzzles, and received guidance from an old, wise man named Saduq. Saduq helped Ibrahim destroy some of the glass walls by improving his behavior. In the last chapter, Ibrahim learned more about the Qurʾān and its importance in our daily lives.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM

Part 11: Falling into Panic

At the sound of the loud siren, Ibrahim stopped completely in his tracks and covered his ears. Everything had become pitch black, and he did not know what was happening! Was it all over? He looked around for Saduq, but it was so dark that he could not see anything! He tried to speak, but the siren was so loud that he could not even hear the sound of his own voice. What was happening?

As the siren continued to blare, Ibrahim grew more terrified. How did time go by so fast? Could it really all be over? He did not have enough time to do everything that he wanted to do in life. If he knew that there was such a limited amount of time, he would have used the time that he had in the garden much more carefully. He thought back to all of the time that he had wasted doing useless things.

If only he had known it was going to end this fast, he would have done things differently! He would have paid more attention to what he was doing, instead of acting like he had all of the time in the world! If only he had known that there was such a short time limit, he would have spent his energy more wisely. He sighed and prayed for the siren to stop.

All of a sudden, the siren stopped ringing and everything went bright again. *Alḥamdulillāh,* Ibrahim thought to himself. He looked around him, but everything seemed different somehow. Saduq was nowhere to be seen. Behind the glass walls, he now saw something quite odd—plants of various shapes and sizes had appeared. They were beautiful, healthy plants, some with gorgeous flowers. Seeing these plants, he was filled with hope and wanted to stay and look at them forever!

On each plant, there was something which looked like a massive label or price tag. He placed his face against the glass wall and realized that it was not a price tag—it was a deed tag! On it, the following was written:

What was really weird was that the reward tracker kept increasing every minute. His eyes widened. This was so cool, but what was it? He glanced around the other side of the glass wall and saw a horrible looking tree. The sky around this tree was dark and gloomy, and the air was noxious. He felt despair and regret just looking at it! There were fruits hanging from the tree that were shaped like devils' heads.
One of the tags on a fruit read:

• LYING to get out of trouble: Committed by Ibrahim, son of Yahya
• DATE: Sept 2nd, 2013.
• NEVER REPENTED
• QUALITY: Done to protect himself.
• DEMERITS: 100

This number stayed still, neither increasing, nor decreasing. It seemed as though his deeds had turned into plants on the other side of the glass walls. Were these the results of his entire life? What was going on? Was this the Day of Judgment? Ibrahim's eyes widened, and in complete shock, he tripped over a rock and fell unconscious.

In our present lives, there are only very few things that we know for certain and without a doubt. One of these things is that our lives on Earth will end, and none of us will live forever. This is true for all of us, and it is a sure fact that everyone who is born will die someday! Indeed, we all came from Allah ﷻ and we will all return back to Him.[1]

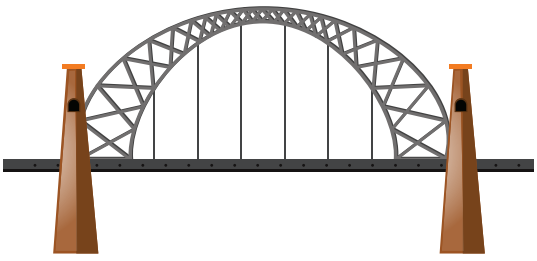
> "Wherever a person might be, and no matter how protected or secure one may think they are, death will eventually overtake everyone."[2]

In the story, Ibrahim has not yet died, but all of a sudden something terrifying happens. He hears a siren and everything goes black. This makes him reflect on his life, and what he has done in terms of the tests he has been given so far. He realizes that his time is limited, and he should have used his time better. He has a lot of questions, and wonders what is happening to him.

Sometimes, when we realize that our time is limited in this world and that we are going to die, we also have a lot of questions.

Some of us probably wonder what is going to happen when we die, and what is going to happen in the next world. We might wonder what is the connection between this world and the next world? It is normal and natural to have these kinds of questions. In fact, having these questions can help us prepare for our next journey!

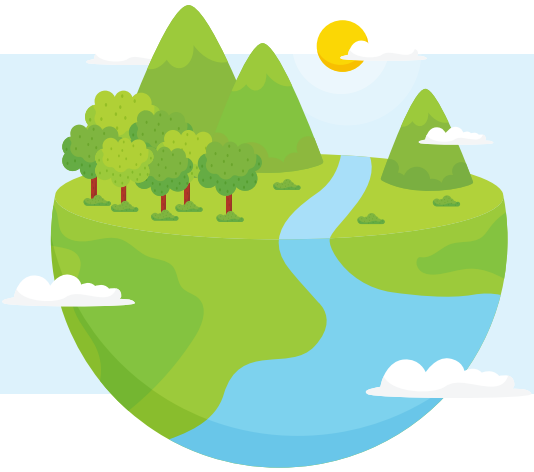
This material world *(dunyā)*—is temporary, which is why it is important to understand that it is not our goal to get everything in this world because this world is merely a bridge to the Hereafter. Just like bridges connect two places together, this world and the Hereafter are also connected to one another!



1 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 156.
2 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah an-Nisā' (4), Verse 78.

RESURRECTION AND THE DAY OF JUDGMENT GIVES THIS WORLD A VALID PURPOSE

We live in a vast and expansive universe, the limits of which we still have not discovered. We also see the incredible level of detail and precision within this universe, and how it has been designed to permit life in general, and human life in particular. It does not make sense that all of this is here so that one day it will just perish and cease to exist, with no consequences or effects. Why would the Wise and Intelligent Creator, Allah ﷻ, create such an incredible world in vain (without any purpose or reason for it)? Allah ﷻ asks us to consider this question many times in the Qurʾān, and affirms that this world was not created in vain.



الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَٰذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Those who remember Allah while standing or sitting or (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creations of the heavens and the earth (thinking): "Our Nurturer, You did not create this in vain (or aimlessly); Glory to be You, so protect us from the punishment of the fire.[3]

Allah ﷻ tells us that this incredible creation is there as a prelude to an even greater system of creation that will come after it—the eternal Hereafter. This entire universe exists, and is inhabitable by us so that we can go through different tests and trials of life, and earn our place in the eternal system of creation which will come in the Hereafter. If we did not believe that there would be an eternal life after this one, then what true purpose would we have to struggle in this world, or improve ourselves, or to do good or be moral?

This is why those people mentioned in the above verse of the Qurʾān—once they have pondered on the incredible beauty and precision of the heavens and the earth—declare three things:

1. This world could not have been created in vain,
2. Allah ﷻ is too Great to have created a world in vain,
3. The purpose of this world is for us to experience and go through tests and trials, and earn our place in an eternal life of bliss—this is why the verse *(āyah)* ends by these people asking Allah ﷻ to protect them from the fire of Hell which will be in the eternal afterlife.

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Āl ʿImrān (3), Verse 191.

Activity 4.1a: Discussion

DIRECTIONS: Consider the following questions independently, then discuss them with your group. Create a 3-5 sentence response that you can then share with the class.

1. Do you enjoy taking tests?
2. What might it be like to never take another school test again?
3. Aside from the obvious reduction in student stress, what might be some **drawbacks** to never taking another test in school?
4. Are tests a necessary part of the learning process? If so, then why?
5. How might we apply this understanding of academic testing to help us better understand our purpose in this worldly life?

RECKONING IS NECESSARY FOR TRUE JUSTICE

When we discussed the Justice of Allah ﷻ in previous lessons, we talked about how His Justice only makes sense if there is a Hereafter which He has told us about, and that ultimate justice will occur in that world. The Day of Judgment *(Qiyāmah)* is a platform for the true Justice of Allah ﷻ. We know that Allah ﷻ is All-Just, and His Justice entails that everyone will be held accountable for their good and bad choices. True justice cannot be attained in this world, so there has to be another world where that can be implemented! Allah ﷻ has promised this for all of us. He says that those who do good and righteous deeds, and have faith cannot be treated in the same way as those who do evil and bad things, and do not believe. Furthermore, Allah ﷻ says that He created the world according to the truth and perfect justice, and that every person will get what they deserve according to their actions.[4]

Similarly, Allah ﷻ is *al-Ḥakīm*, the All-Wise. Everything He does has a reason and purpose behind it. He created us with a purpose—which is to become as close to Him as we can through worship, servitude, and obedience to Him alone. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ asks us an obvious question: "Do you think that We have created you without a purpose, and that you will not be brought back to Us?"[5] Of course we have a purpose, and we will definitely be brought back to Him. However, this purpose cannot truly be reached in this world, only in the next.

Knowing that this world is a test where Allah ﷻ sees how we act, it only makes sense that He would create another world where we will be able to see the consequences of our actions, and true justice can then be served. After all, this is in line with His ultimate Justice! This is why we need a Day of Reckoning *(Yaumul Hisāb)* where we will stand in the Court of Allah ﷻ and be compensated for all our deeds in this world.

THE DAY OF RECKONING ENTAILS CONSEQUENCES

Some of us might wonder: what is the benefit of having a Day of Judgment? What is in it for us, and how does it help us become closer to Allah ﷻ?

We know that our purpose in this life is to obey and worship Allah ﷻ, and become closer to Him; and try to reach a high level in Paradise which is after this current life. There is a certain level of closeness to Allah ﷻ that we can only achieve in the next world. However, this world is a platform where we can prepare the best for that life ***(ākhirah)***, and know that we will be held accountable there for whatever we do here. One of our tests here is that we do not always see the results or consequences of our actions in this world immediately. This is a world or place of actions, and the next world is the world of results and consequences, where we will see the full effects and outcomes of all of our actions—both good and bad. Allah ﷻ tells us that on the Day of Judgment, we will see whatever good and bad we did, even if it is as small as an atom's weight.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ ۝ فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ۝ وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ۝

On that day, humankind will issue forth in various groups to be shown their deeds. So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.[6]

Sometimes, we perform bad actions very easily because we do not see an immediate punishment. We think that nothing will happen. For example, if we are home alone and are not allowed to watch television at a certain time, we might still watch it, thinking that our parents will never find out about it. However, the reality is that Allah ﷻ is All-Knowing, and we will eventually be held accountable because everything is being recorded, and has a consequence attached to it. If there were no such consequences, then we would not have much motivation to do the right thing because we may feel that in this world we can somehow still get away with doing whatever we want to—whether it is right or wrong—without seeing the real or full outcome of what we are doing. Whereas if we believe in a Day of Accounting where we will have to face the consequences of all of our actions, then we will do things knowing that we will face the full outcome of everything we do—whether it is done publicly or privately, and whether it is a great deed or a small one. If people truly believed in the Hereafter, they would not perform evil deeds, and the world in which we live would be a much better place.

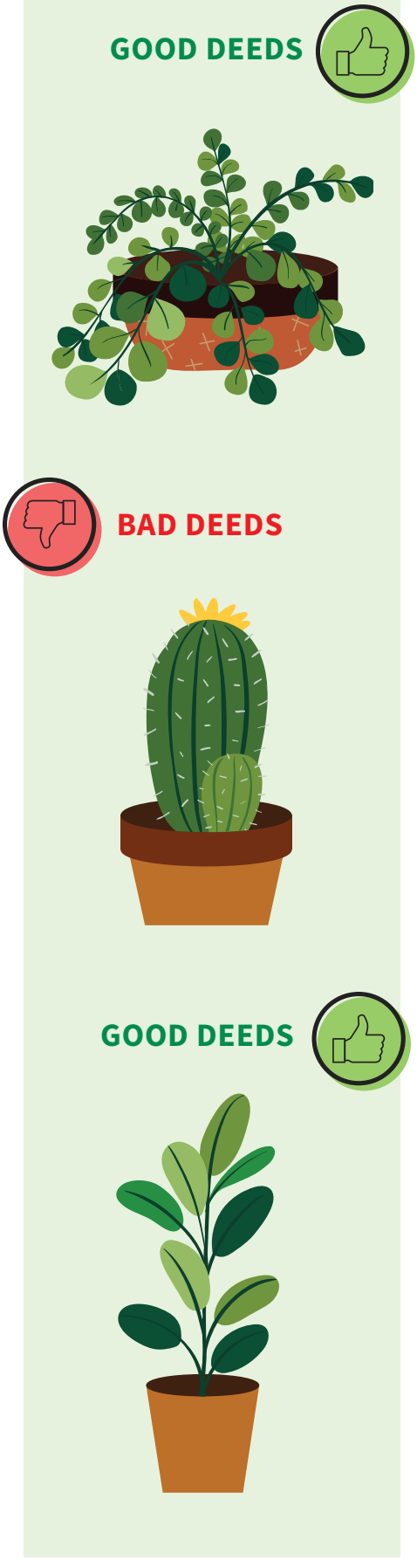
4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Jāthiyah (45), Verses 21-22.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Muʿminūn (23), Verse 115.
6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah az-Zalzalah (99), Verses 6-8.

Imām ʿAlī ﷺ tells us that today is the day of action where we are not held accountable; and tomorrow, the Day of Judgment, is the Day of Accountability where there will be no action.[7] In the Qurʿān, Allah ﷻ tells us that on that Day, people will beg to be given permission to come back to this world in order to do good deeds, however they will not be allowed.

This world is like farmland where we are planting our good and bad deeds, and we will see the results of those seeds in the next world *(ākhirah)*.

Think about the story of Ibrahim that we just read. He saw that on the other side of the glass wall, plants had grown from the deeds that he had committed. Whatever actions he had performed had results that were either good or bad on the other side of the glass wall—depending on what he had done. Similarly, whatever we do in this world will show up on the Day of Judgment, and the results will depend on the quality of our actions!

Think about an example regarding school. Your teacher tells you that there will be a test after a certain number of units. It is up to you whether or not you study, but knowing that there is going to be a test should encourage you to pay attention and study in advance. At the time of the test, however, you cannot turn time back. If you study and work hard, then you will see the benefits—you will receive a good grade on the test. But if you did not study or review your notes, then you will have to face the negative effects—you will most likely fail the test. This analogy is kind of like the Day of Judgment: The deeds that you performed in this worldly life are what will matter, and will have positive or negative effects accordingly.



Activity 4.1b: Consider it

Your classroom has certain rules that all students must adhere to for a cohesive and functional learning environment. Imagine if a student were to enter the classroom and proceed to disregard all of the rules.

1. How might it affect the overall classroom environment?

   _____

2. Will that student be able to be successful in their studies?

   _____

3. If another student diligently takes notes and follows all of the rules that the teacher sets out for students, then what will be the most likely outcome for them?

   _____

7 Āmidī, Abul Fatḥ, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, Vol.1, P. 177.

DAY OF JUDGMENT KEEPS US ON TRACK

When we know that there will be a Day of Accounting, we will act better in this world, and be more encouraged to watch our every deed. When we are aware that all of our actions are being recorded and will have consequences, this helps us to remain firm on the path toward our purpose. When we remember death and the Day of Judgment, it keeps us on track and has the following benefits:

- Stops us from focusing on meaningless things
- Keeps us away from doing bad things
- Pushes us to do good deeds
- Prevents us from getting attached to this world
- Encourages us to help others, and learn from people

STORY CONNECTION: In the story, when Ibrahim thought that his life and the world he was in had ended, he immediately felt regret about not having used his time more wisely. If he had truly understood and thought about how temporary life is, he would not have wasted any time.

When we reflect on the next life and the Day of Judgment, we are not just thinking about a few days in front of us, but rather our vision becomes long-term. Sometimes, we may do this in our lives, but we only think about a few years in advance. For example, gymnasts who are training for the Olympics know that they want to win the competition taking place several years later. But before they can actually get to the Olympics or even qualify for them, they have to train for years. Every decision they make will be in line with reaching this goal. They will choose what food they eat very carefully, and make every decision according to how it may help them reach their goal. Whenever they become tired or start to lose hope, remembering their goal will once again push them to move forward toward their aim. By visualizing the gold medal which they desire, they can make the best choices that will ultimately help them to reach their goal.

Now, imagine if we thought about things with an even longer term and goal in mind—like Paradise! When we constantly visualize reaching our goal and eternal bliss, then we will be motivated to make good choices and keep our end in mind. Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:

...مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ۝

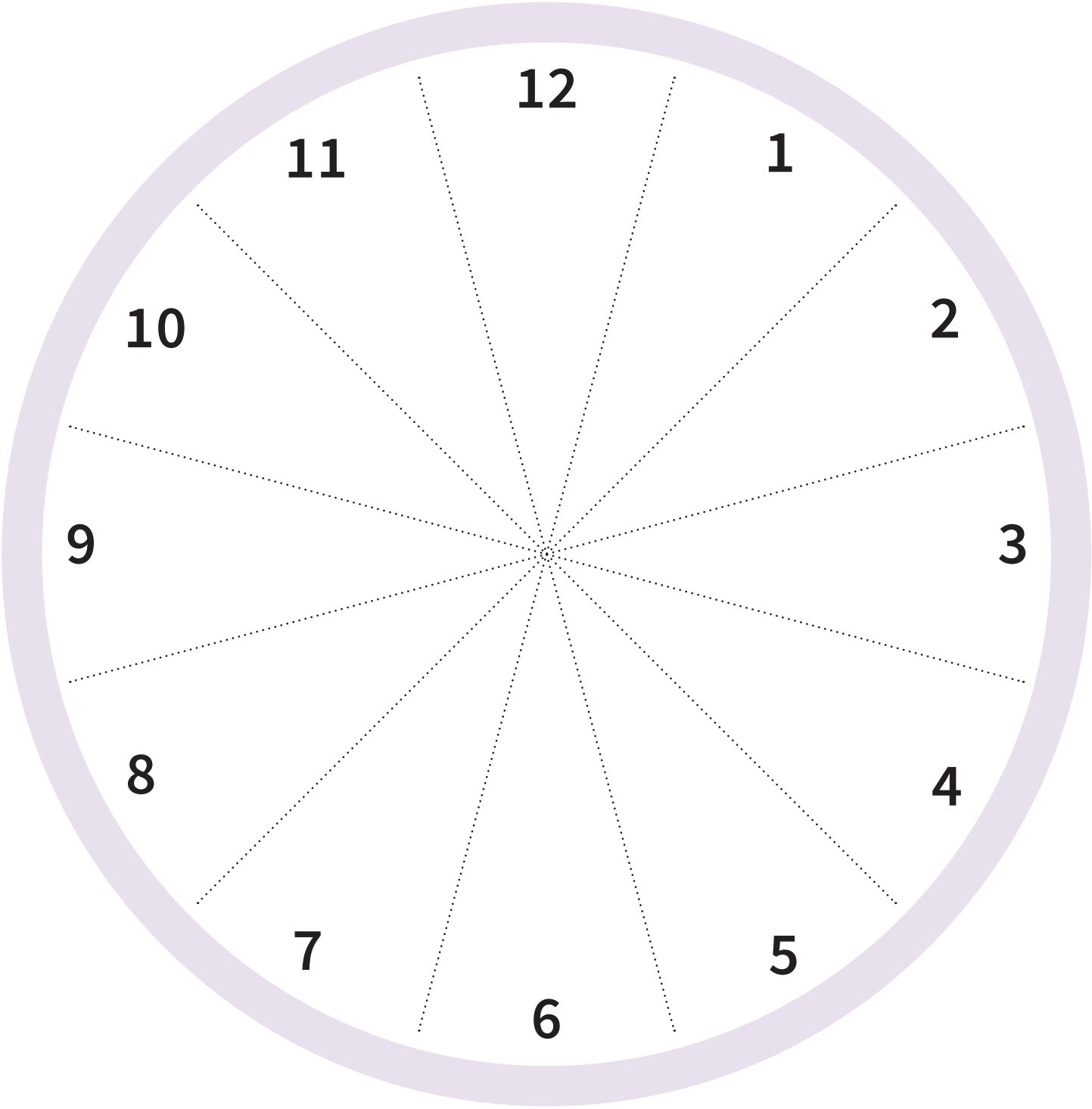
...those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously—they shall have their reward from their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.[8]

It might not always be easy for us to make the right choice, but when we remember that we are living for the next world, and this is all just temporary, then it will make things a little bit easier. When we realize that we will be held accountable for all of our actions, then it will help us to avoid making bad choices or performing forbidden *(ḥarām)* things. On the Day of Judgment, every single one of our deeds will be presented to us. In fact, the earth, and all of our body parts will talk and tell Allah ﷻ what it is that we did in this world—whether it was something good or bad. Keeping all of this in perspective can really help us be conscious and make the best choices that are in line with pleasing Allah ﷻ and becoming closer to Him.

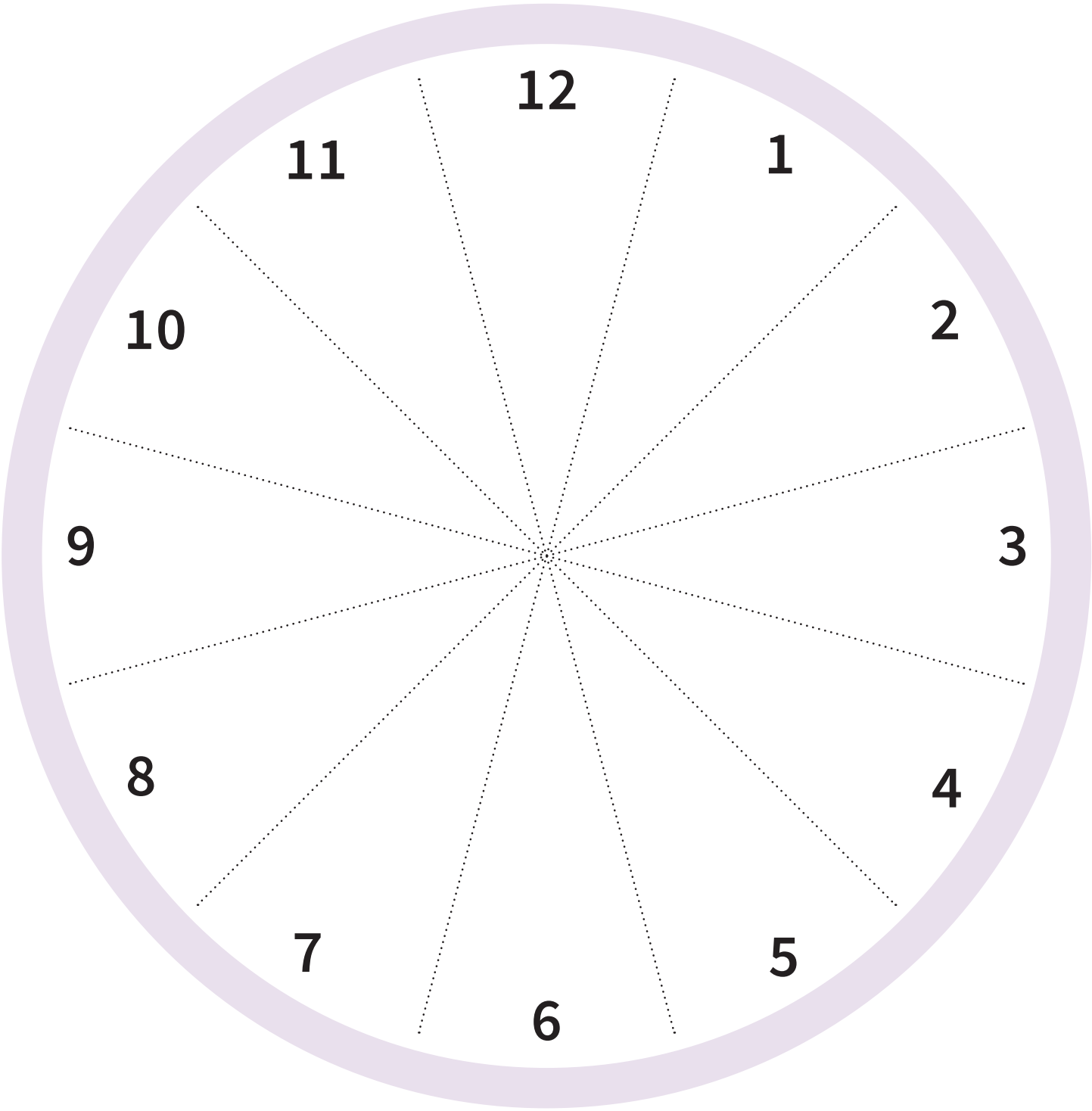
8 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 62.

Activity 4.1c: Eliminating Time Wasters and Distractions

Using the clock graphic organizer below, identify some time wasting activities or distractions that you may engage in from time to time throughout the day. In the second clock face, brainstorm one activity per time slot that you could engage in that will earn you a good reward in the Hereafter. You may start the clock at 12pm (noon) if it helps you reflect on your waking hours.



Activity 4.1c: Eliminating Time Wasters and Distractions (Continued)



CONCLUSION

Death is the only certainty that we have in this life, and after we die we will all be brought back to life to face the Day of Judgment. On that Day, we will be asked about all of our actions in this world, and will see the results. We need a Day of Accounting for these consequences to materialize, to help us stay on track, and to fulfill the Justice of Allah. Whatever we do in this life will show up in the next world as the fruits of the seeds that our deeds have planted. We must take advantage of what little time we have on this earth to make good choices with sincere intentions and always keep Allah ﷻ in mind, and try our best to become closer to Him through our actions. If we truly struggle, then Allah ﷻ will help us through this!

Activity 4.1d: Encounters in Paradise

Draw a picture of some beautiful scenery (plants, landscapes, wildlife, buildings) that you would love to encounter in Paradise. For each item, come up with a tag or label of a good deed that might help you secure this reward. Tip: consider scaling each deed to the magnitude of the object in your illustration.

4.2 The Mercy and Justice of Allah ﷻ

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Outline how the Mercy and Justice of Allah ﷻ go hand in hand.
- Analyze why the journey to Paradise will be different for everyone.
- Define the three types of rights that we have in life.
- Explain the Mercy and Justice of Allah ﷻ in terms of the consequences of our actions.

STORY RECAP: Ibrahim is a young boy who has been in a garden with glass walls for what feels like many days. His first objective was to find water, and along the way he solved many puzzles and received guidance from an old, wise man named Saduq. Saduq helped Ibrahim destroy some of the glass walls by improving his behaviour. In the last chapter, he heard a blazing siren and woke up to what felt like the Day of Judgment.

IBRAHIM'S DREAM
Part 12: Waking Up

Ibrahim slowly opened his eyes, groaning in incredible pain, as even this simple task was difficult. It felt as though his entire body was on fire. His legs and hands were mostly numb, and all he could see through his open eyes was white. He shut his eyes again, trying to remember what had happened. *What was happening to him? Where was he?*

He tried to remember the last thing that had taken place. He remembered the garden that he was stuck in, how a siren had started blaring, and how he saw various plants behind the glass walls. Has the Day of Judgment really arrived? Is he doomed? Most of his deeds in that garden looked pretty disgusting. He had a few good deeds, but so many bad ones! He felt tears starting to fill his eyes. The ugly garden was the result of his own actions, and those deeds were the seeds that he himself had planted. He could not blame anyone else except himself. The worst part was that he knew he could have done better. It would have been so easy to be good and do righteous actions. All of the Islamic rules were possible to follow, even if they were a bit difficult at times. Most of the rules he had broken were simply because he was just lazy. If only he had a chance to go back to the world and do things better, he would have made all of the right choices—he would give anything to be able to do that!

O Allah, he thought to himself, please give me the chance to do better. Please do not let this be the Day of Judgment yet. Please let me not be dead!

Tears filled his eyes as he began to hear odd noises. He forcefully opened his eyes to see what was happening. Much to his dismay however, he still could not move. Ibrahim began to panic—he could tell that he was not in the garden anymore! Was he dead or alive? He tried to scream, but no sound would come out.

As he stared toward the ceiling, all he could see was a white light. It was a little blurry because he could not move his head. After a few seconds, something began to block the white light. His vision gradually started to clear up, and soon, hovering above him, he saw his amazing mother with an expression of incredulity and excitement on her face. He was so happy to see her! Was she another vision, or proof that he was still in the land of the living?

Slowly, his mind registered the pure white light above as the ceiling and lightbulb overhead. Looking around, he soon realized he was in some kind of hospital bed. He tried to open his mouth to speak, but still no sound would come out. He was elated to see his mother, and knew that everything she had told him in the past—all of those reminders about doing what was right, and listening to and obeying Allah ﷻ, and the Prophets ﷺ and the Imāms ﷺ—all of that was true. He was so grateful to have such a wonderful mother!

"Nurse!" His mother started calling out, raising her voice in an excited panic. "Call the doctor! Ibrahim has opened his eyes! He is coming back to us from the coma! He is going to be okay, inshāʿAllah!" Tears of thankfulness and joy escaped her eyes and she began sobbing. Her young son was alive!

All of a sudden, a flood of memories started to rush back to Ibrahim. He had been playing soccer with some friends when out of nowhere, a car came speeding around the corner, driving straight into Ibrahim. He remembered his entire body hitting the windshield with incredible force.

Ibrahim gravely recognized that he should have died in a car accident of that great magnitude. The car had hit him directly head on! But here he was, lying in a hospital bed, alive! After the accident, the only thing Ibrahim could remember was the garden with glass walls, and the wonderful things that Saduq had taught him. Was that all just a dream? It could not have been! He had learned so much, and everything that Saduq told him—he just knew that all of it was true. He could not have dreamt up the amazing conversations that he had with Saduq.

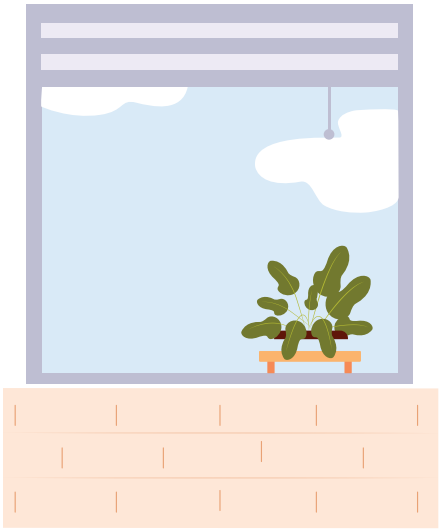
Ibrahim snapped back to reality. Several nurses rushed into the room and prepared him for the doctor's arrival. They checked his pulse, put a light in his eyes to check his vision, and started to poke and prod him, asking him if he felt anything, and requesting that he blink his eyes to signal he could hear them. He tried to communicate with them the best he could by blinking.

O Allah, please give me back the feeling in my legs and arms. I promise to use them in a good way, and become a better Muslim! he prayed. In no time, Ibrahim began to feel a fuzzy, tingling sensation in his legs and arms, and soon after that, he was able to speak. "Alḥamdulillah!" Ibrahim finally managed to say. Allah ﷻ had listened to his prayer! His mother, Rahmah, was still crying, but she could not stop hugging and kissing Ibrahim at the same time.

“Mom, what happened?!” His mother looked at him with tears glistening in her eyes.

“Ibrahim, since the terrible accident, you have been in a coma. We have been praying so hard for your miraculous recovery, and were reciting Ziyārat ʿAshūrāʿ and Qurʾān every single day. Alḥamdulillāh, we were lucky enough to find an amazing doctor who is Muslim as well! Every day, he would come and talk to you, and tell you all about life. I cannot wait for you to meet your doctor, Ibrahim! You are going to love him! Oh, here he is now!”

The doctor walked in and introduced himself: “Salāmun ʿalaykum, Ibrahim. My name is Saduq!”



Ibrahim could not believe his eyes—it was Uncle Saduq from his dreams! Did he remember everything that had happened in the garden? Was Saduq there with him? Saduq began a conversation with the nurses and his mother about the different medications that Ibrahim will now have to take since he is awake from his coma. Ibrahim kind of zoned out, still overwhelmed by all of the new revelations. How was Saduq his doctor? He looked around the room curiously, desperate to find some evidence of the garden.

There, lying on the window sill, Ibrahim noticed an odd-looking plant with a deed tag. It was the same deed tag that Ibrahim remembered from the garden. His eyes widened. So, the garden was real?! He looked at Saduq, then back to the plants, then back again at Saduq—trying to figure out what had happened. He continued looking for some kind of clue, any clue.

Ibrahim finally caught Saduq’s gaze. As if Saduq knew exactly what Ibrahim was thinking, the older man slowly grinned, and his smile sparkled. Then looking right at Ibrahim, he winked.

Death, as we have learned, is a certainty for all of us. Every creature will taste death, and everyone will be held accountable for their actions, and receive consequences according to the deeds that they performed in this world. The Day of Judgment sounds very scary, but we have also learned that Allah ﷻ is All-Merciful. So how does His Mercy fit into the Day of Judgment? If Allah is so Merciful, then can He not just forgive everyone for their sins and let people go straight to Paradise? Let us take a look at how Allah’s Mercy and Justice relate to each other, and how consequences will be dealt with on the Day of Judgment.

THE MERCY AND JUSTICE OF ALLAH ﷻ

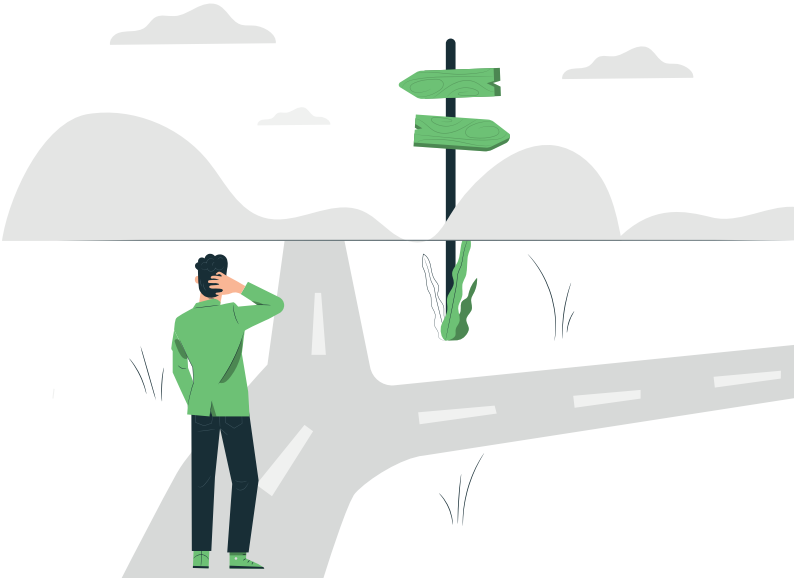
Allah ﷻ is both *Ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful), and *Al-ʿAdl* (the All-Just). His Mercy and Justice go hand in hand and complement each other. We can better understand this by looking at our parents, whose justice is also a result of their mercy. Our parents, who love us dearly, are typically concerned about what we eat. Sure, they might let us eat some dessert, but they do not allow us to eat dessert before every meal, every day. Why not?

If they were not concerned about what we eat, then we would become extremely overweight and develop certain diseases like diabetes or cardiovascular illnesses, etc. which could eventually end up killing us. Our parents love us and want us to live a healthy life, which is why they often intervene and stop us from something that may seem delightful, but in reality is very harmful. This is just one example of the balance between mercy and justice. If we break the rules that our parents set for us, then they might punish or discipline us. The consequences that our parents set for us are an expression of their love and mercy. If they did not set or implement consequences, then we would continue to do things that will harm us in the long term.

What if we do not listen to our parents, and behind their backs we have lots of sweets or desserts every single day? In that case, when we get sick as a result of our actions, then we have no one to blame but ourselves!

Similarly, out of His Justice, Allah ﷻ sent Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ to warn and advise us, and told us that if we do not follow the path of guidance, then we will have failed in the purpose of our creation and for living in this world. We will deprive ourselves of receiving so many of the special gifts that He wanted to give us out of His Love and Mercy. Instead of adorning our souls with the beauty of good acts, we will have polluted them with evil. Allah ﷻ tells us in the Noble Qurʾān:

> "Whoever is guided is only guided for (the benefit of) one's own soul; and whoever errs (chooses misguidance), errs against oneself." [1]



Those who ignore the path of guidance, reject belief in Allah ﷻ and the Judgment Day, or follow their own desires of committing sins and not performing their obligatory *(wājib)* duties will be deprived of those special gifts in this world and the Hereafter. Unless they sincerely repent and return to the right path, they will find themselves in the fire of Hell and they will have no one to blame but themselves! Those who end up being punished in the fire have hurt and oppressed themselves. Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَٰكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

Surely, Allah does not oppress people at all, rather it is they who oppress themselves." [2]

The Hellfire is very, very severe. Allah ﷻ describes it in the Qurʾān as being blazing hot with a frightening noise. It contains noxious gases, boiling water, and devilish companions. It will be a place of humiliation, pain, and regret over not making better choices. Let us all ask for forgiveness from Allah ﷻ, and make the right choices going forward, before it is too late!

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

If someone is pulled over for a traffic violation, it can be an unpleasant experience, but do you think there is any benefit to this? How are policing or similar social structures—which people may fear or dislike—necessary, or even good for a society to be able to progress? Share your thoughts with the class.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Isrāʾ(17), Verse 15.
2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Yūnus (10), Verse 44.

Activity 4.2a: Complete the Table

Can you think of some unpleasant or difficult experiences that you have had to endure because you knew that they were good for you? Is there anything else that you do strictly for the benefits of it, not because you enjoy it? List the activity or experience, and its benefit(s) in the chart below.

DIFFICULT OR UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE(S)	BENEFITS OF THEM
Going to the dentist	Protects you from cavities and diseases

PARADISE: THE RESTING PLACE FOR MOST BELIEVERS

On the Day of Judgment, we will be taken to account for all of our actions. We will be presented with our deeds, and will have to deal with their consequences. It will be a difficult experience for those who are not prepared for that Day. However, after accounting, and facing the necessary punishments for the deeds that were not forgiven, most people will eventually be allowed to enter Heaven. Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:

...وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

...And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will admit them into gardens beneath which rivers flow, they will live therein eternally (forever)...[3]

Allah ﷻ wants us to reach the purpose that He created us for. However, not everyone will enter Paradise right away. Those who committed a lot of sins which they did not ask forgiveness for must first deal with the consequences before they can enter Heaven. Dealing with those punishments can take a very long time in the Hereafter, and will be an extremely difficult and long process. That is why it is so important to always try to make the right choices, and seek forgiveness from Allah ﷻ, the All-Forgiving, if we happen to slip.

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Nisāʾ(4), Verse 13.

Activity 4.2b: Scenarios

Imagine if your only source of drinking water came from a pond in your backyard. Would it be safe for you to drink directly from there, or should the water be filtered and purified first? Now imagine if you have been neglecting and littering this pond for years, and perhaps your entire backyard, because you did not recognize the value of the water that it contained. Will this neglect make your job in purifying the water even harder?

DIRECTIONS: With a partner, come up with all of the steps that you now have to take to filter and purify your pond water in order to make it safe for drinking. Then, discuss some of the ways in which you could have cared for the pond better if you had recognized its value from the very beginning. How does this analogy relate to the idea of human beings reaching Heaven?

CONSEQUENCES

In this life, there are three types of rights that we have to honor and uphold: the rights of Allah ﷻ, the rights of the self, and the rights of others. The rights of Allah ﷻ are fulfilling acts of worship like praying and fasting. The rights of the self are using our body parts, for example, in the correct manner. The rights of others involve making sure that we do not harm or hurt anyone else—physically or emotionally. If we violate any of these—even in the smallest way—we will be held responsible on the Day of Accounting.

Allah ﷻ is All-Merciful, so He **may** forgive us if we violate any rights against Him, or our own selves, as long as we repent for our sins. However, Allah ﷻ is also All-Just, and He has made it very clear that out of His Justice, He will not forgive us for violating the rights of others. Those people whom we hurt have to forgive us themselves. This is why we have to be extremely careful about observing the rights of others—which is known in Arabic as *ḥaqqun nās*. Our Prophets ﷺ, Imāms ﷺ, and scholars were very careful not to violate the rights of anyone at all. If we have knowingly hurt someone, then we should try our best to make it up to them in this world before it is too late.

If a person has committed many sins, they will have to be purified before they are given permission to enter Heaven. What does this exactly mean? Heaven is a very pure place, and only the pure people can enter there. This is similar to how a person must perform the ritual ablution *(wuḍū')* before they can recite their daily prayers *(ṣalāh)* such that one becomes in a state of spiritual purity. So, how can an individual become pure enough to enter Paradise?

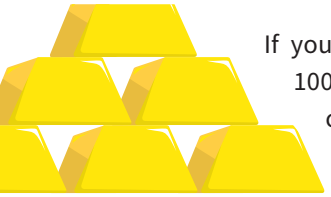
For some people, this involves asking forgiveness for one's sins, and becoming purified as a result. For others, this means suffering difficulties and going through tests in this life to be cleansed of their transgressions (although Allah ﷻ will also challenge people in order to raise them to higher levels of faith and purity). The good deeds that we perform can also elevate us and give us purity, and remove the spiritual pollution caused by sins that we committed.

Three types of rights we have to honor:

1. The rights of Allah ﷻ
2. The rights of the self
3. The rights of others

However, some believers may still end up leaving this world in an impure spiritual state. As a consequence, they will have to suffer difficulties in the grave, or the life of *Barzakh* (the intermediary stage between this world and the Day of Judgment). Others may have to spend some time in Hell in order to be purified from their sins or bad characteristics before they can be given permission to enter Heaven. The amount of time and severity of the punishment depends on a person's actions.

Perhaps the following example can better help us understand the need for spiritual cleansing in the Hereafter:



If you are mining for gold and come across 100% pure 24-karat gold, then it is in perfect condition! This gold can go straight to a jeweller to be sold.

However, at times, you will find 24-karat gold, but it has a tiny bit of other metal mixed in with it. In order to purify this gold, you will have to burn it a little before it is ready to be sold.

Other times you may find 24-karat gold that has a lot of other metal mixed in with it, and you will have to burn it a lot in order to purify it.

Similarly, punishments after death may be needed in order to purify a person when they leave this world in an impure spiritual state; and the scale of difficulties that they will have to face will be based on their level of spiritual impurity. This all will prepare them to be able to enter Heaven after being completely cleansed.

Most human beings will fall in one of the three categories described above: not requiring any purification, needing a little bit of purification, or having to undergo a lot of purification. But what about those people whom the Qurʾān says will reside in Hell forever?

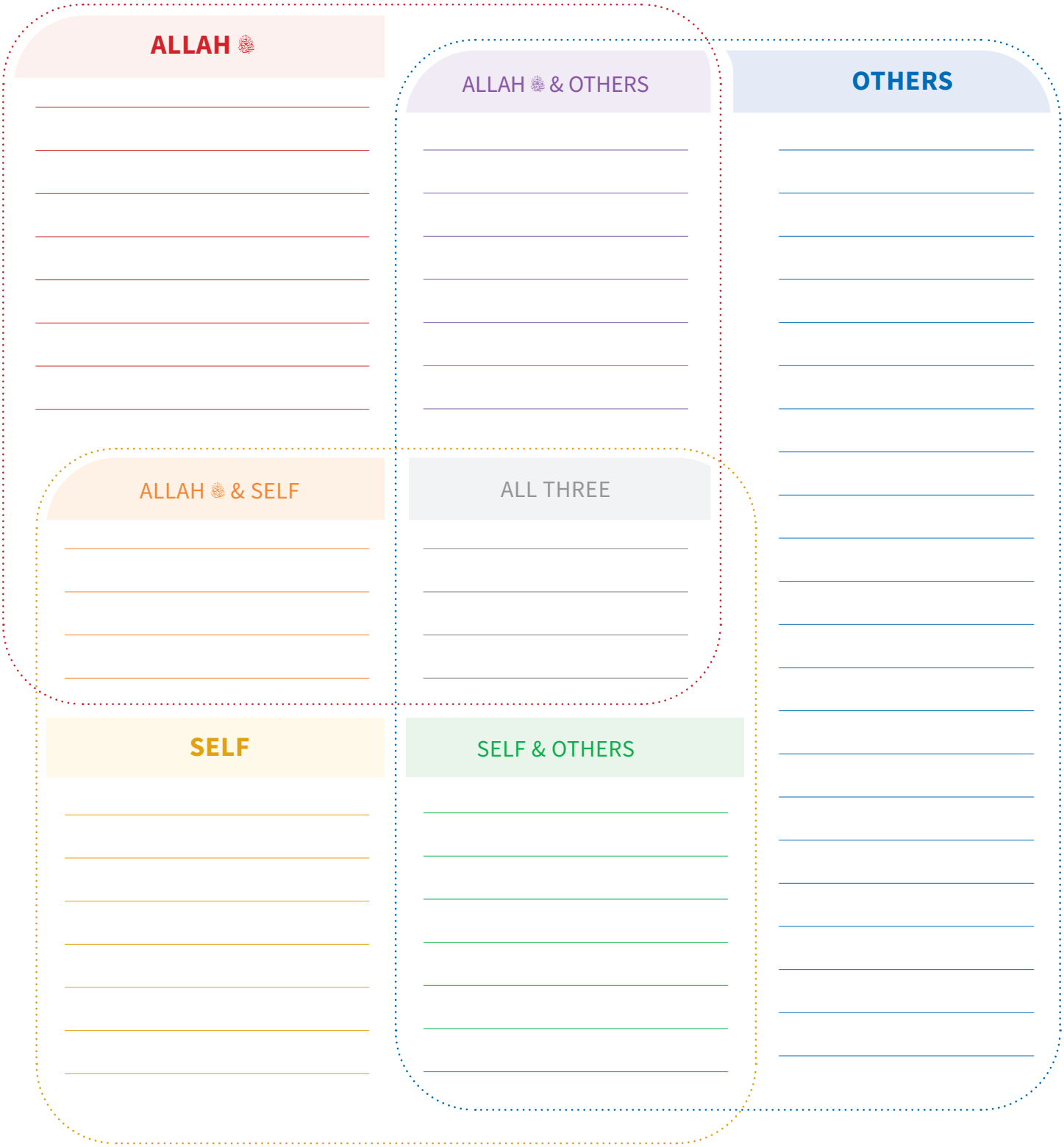
Well, sometimes you find a metal that has zero gold in it. It does not matter how much you burn this metal, it will never become gold. These people—the ones who will remain in Hell forever—are those stubborn people who insist on rejecting belief in Allah ﷻ and the Day of Judgment despite knowing it to be the truth. They are the people who violate the laws of Allah ﷻ so often that sins become part of their character and inner nature, and they cannot be separated from them. These are people who—even if they were given a chance to come back to this world—would not change their ways.

CONCLUSION

We are given only one chance at life. Our time here in this world is limited, and it is up to us to make the most of it. We should try to collect as many rewards as we can, and avoid as many sins as possible, because we are answerable for all of our actions. We want to receive Allah's special gifts and mercy in this world, as well as on the Day of Judgment, and we want to enter Heaven immediately without having to go through any purification in the grave or Hellfire. However, in order to do this, we must make good choices in life, observe the rights of Allah ﷻ, take care of ourselves, uphold the rights of others, and seek forgiveness for all of our wrongdoings. Inshāʾ Allah, then we can be amongst those who will enter and reside in Heaven forever.

Activity 4.2c: Venn Diagram

Using the venn diagram below, brainstorm some examples of rights that belong in the three categories that we have to honor in order to enter Paradise: the rights of Allah ﷻ, the rights of the self, and the rights of others. Can you think of any examples that may fall into more than one category? If so, then place them in the areas that overlap.

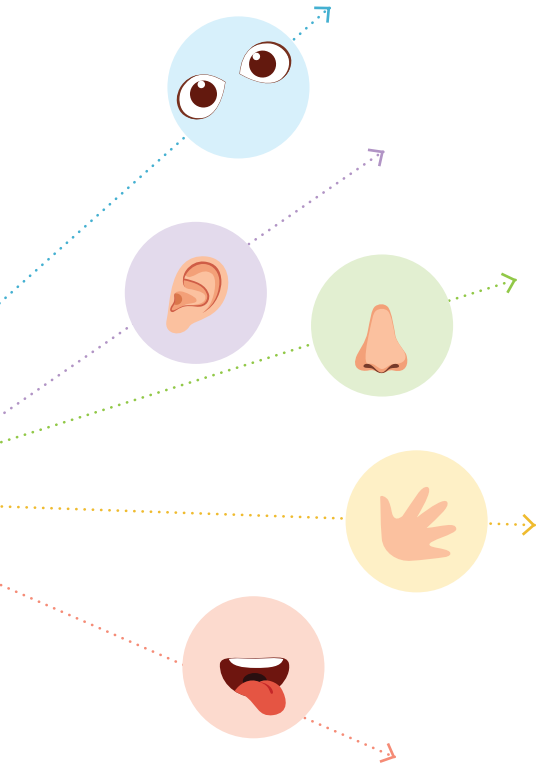


4.3 The Soul

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Familiarize ourselves with the terms *ar-Rūḥ*, *an-Nafs*, and *al-Qalb.*
- Differentiate between material and immaterial things.
- Realize that one of the purposes of our life in this world is to struggle against the parts of our self *(nafs)* which encourages us to commit sins, or follow desires that are outside of the limits set by Islam.
- Understand that death is not the end of our existence, therefore pain or pleasure in this world is short, while our soul will endure these things for much longer.



Through Ibrahim's story, we learned about the purpose of life, the guides sent to help us reach this purpose, life after death, and the necessity of a Day of Judgement. We saw how Ibrahim was surrounded by glass walls that were stopping him from reaching his destination. Glass walls can symbolize the bad qualities which we possess, or behaviors that hurt or harm our soul—they prevent our soul from reaching the potential it was created for.

In this lesson, we will discuss how we have both a physical existence—our body, and an existence that goes beyond our body—our soul. We will look at how being aware of our soul and looking after it will allow us to break these walls that hold us back from reaching our purpose.

TERMINOLOGY

There are different words that have been used for 'the soul' in the Arabic language. The most important ones that we need to know are:

- *Ar-Rūḥ* (the Soul or Spirit).
- *An-Nafs* (the Soul or Spirit).
- *Al-Qalb* (the Spiritual Heart).

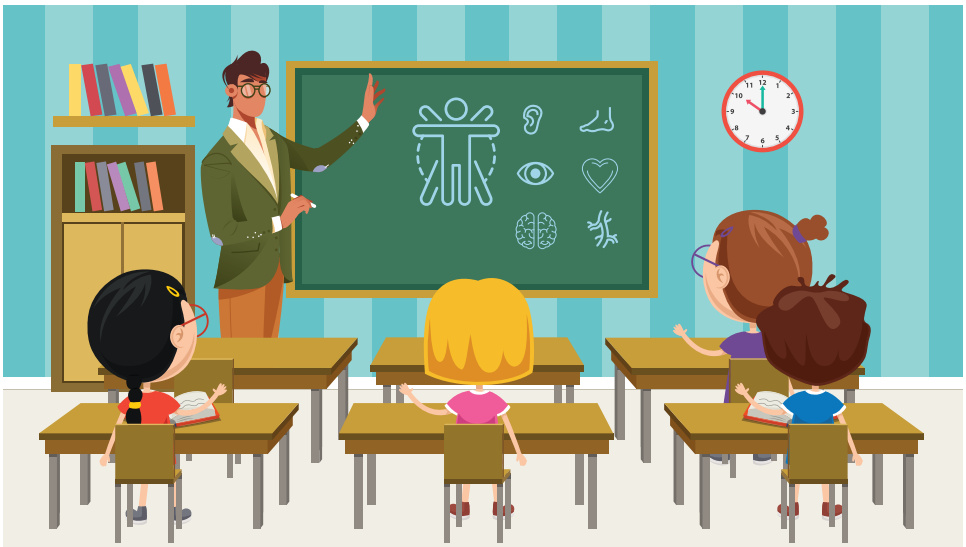
Even though all of these terms refer to the soul, or what makes a person more than just a body, one word may be used over another in order to better understand a certain concept.

THE WORLD BEYOND THE SENSES

Before we begin to discuss the soul, we need to reflect on the world which we live in. We can easily focus on the things we can see, hear, smell, or feel in this world—things we can experience with our senses. We can comprehend those things we are able to measure and which have a shape and size. However, there are also many things in this world that we do not experience with our senses and which cannot be measured, such as emotions. We know for example that we feel love, anger, fear, etc., but we cannot see or touch these things. We cannot say "they are here" or "they are there" or "they are this big or that small."

Things we can see, hear, smell, touch, or taste are called **material** things. These things have shape, color, and size.

Things that we cannot perceive with our senses, but can experience or think about are **immaterial** things. These have no shape, size, or color.



Let us look at this story

One day, a teacher was teaching his class, and the following conversation took place:

TEACHER: Can you see my arm? Yes. That means it exists.
Can you see my nose? Yes. That means it exists.
Can you see God? No. That means He does not exist.

One of the students raised her hands and asked if she could add something. The teacher allowed her.

STUDENT: Can you see the teacher's ears? Yes. That means they exist!
Can you see the teacher's hair? Yes. That means it exists.
Can you see the teacher's intelligence? No, but you can see the effects of his intelligence. He is able to learn, teach, and make deductions. This tells us that he has intelligence, even though we cannot see his intelligence.

The teacher was very impressed by this answer from his student.

STOP AND REFLECT: What point was the student making in this analogy?

The student was trying to point out the fact that there are many things, like our intelligence and emotions, that even though we cannot see, or touch, or measure them, it does not mean that they do not exist. We know they exist because we see their effects.

THE SOUL

Our existence is not only made up of our body—which is physical, but also our soul. The soul is what makes you 'you.' Think about the following situation: You have a friend called Hasan. As Hasan grows up, his body goes through the usual processes of cell breakdown and regeneration. This means that as Hasan grows up, he will lose all of the cells in his body and get new ones. In fact, Hasan will change so much in appearance that if you do not see him for a few years, then run into him on the street, you might not even recognize him! Now, all of the cells in his body are different to the old ones, and he looks totally different. So is he still Hasan? Yes, of course he is!

So, if it is not his body parts or the cells of his body that make Hasan 'Hasan,' then what is it that makes him 'Hasan?' It is his soul. The soul is something that we cannot see or experience with our five senses, but it is something that we all know is there with us. We know that a person's identity remains the same no matter what happens to their body because something about them stays the same. That something is the soul, or the 'spirit of life' which they have.

FORMING OUR SOULS

Every human being is born with a pure soul. Allah ﷻ teaches the soul of everyone what is good for it and what is harmful to it. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ۝ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا۝

And (by) the soul (nafs), and the One who made it; and He inspired it with its vices (wickedness) and its virtues (righteousness).[1]

This is why we know—even without being taught—that certain things like being fair to people are good, and certain things like being unfair to people are evil.

1 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah ash-Shams (91), Verses 7-8.

When our soul is attached to our body, it has two different paths that it can take. On one hand, an untrained *nafs* can encourage a person to sin and follow their desires. If a person does this as a habit, then they will end up worse off than an animal. This is because they will become slaves of their desires, and take on animalistic behaviors even though they were created to achieve much more in life than animals. On the other hand, the *nafs,* when controlled, can encourage a person to do good and make themselves as perfect as one can be. In doing so, one can become even better and higher than the angels.

One of the purposes of life is to struggle against that aspect of our *nafs* which encourages us to commit sins or follow those desires which are outside of the limits set by Islam. Let us take a look at a story which illustrates this point.

A poor woman with young children has two neighbors: one to her left, and one to her right. Both of her neighbors know that tonight, this poor woman has no food for her children.

The neighbor on the left thinks about giving her own food for that night to her neighbor. A battle starts between the forces of good and the forces of evil within her soul. The good forces tell her to stay hungry herself so that her neighbor's young children, who need the food more, can eat; but the evil forces tell her that she should look after herself before anyone else. She eats the food herself and sleeps that night with a full stomach, but she is unsettled because there is a voice inside of her that tells her she did something that was not really right.

The neighbor on the right has the same battle between her good and evil forces. She makes a different decision though. She takes her own food for her neighbor's children to eat. She sleeps hungry that night, but she is spiritually content, knowing that she did something righteous. This makes her feel good and happy inside, and soothes her hunger in a different way. She is filled with confidence and hope that Allah ﷻ will provide for her in the upcoming day.

In every situation in life, we have a choice to follow the good or evil forces of our self. We will now look at some important points that will help us make the right choices.

Activity 4.3a: Role-Playing in Dealing with the Nafs

Just as the story above illustrates an inner struggle to make the right choice, come up with a scenario in which a person has two options or choices to make—one that is beneficial for their *nafs* and one that is detrimental. Working with a partner or in a group, outline the benefits and consequences of each option—both in terms of material and immaterial outcomes—and decide what the ideal choice, as Muslims, would be to make.

Role-Playing Scenario:

_____

_____

_____

CHOICE A: _____

MATERIAL BENEFITS **(Real-World benefits, or benefits for our body)**	**MATERIAL CONSEQUENCES** **(Real-World consequences, or consequences for our body)**

IMMATERIAL BENEFITS **(Benefits for our soul)**	**IMMATERIAL CONSEQUENCES** **(Consequences for our soul)**

Activity 4.3a: Nafs Role-Playing (Continued)

CHOICE B: _____

MATERIAL BENEFITS **(Real-World benefits, or benefits for our body)**	**MATERIAL CONSEQUENCES** **(Real-World consequences, or consequences for our body)**

IMMATERIAL BENEFITS **(Benefits for our soul)**	**IMMATERIAL CONSEQUENCES** **(Consequences for our soul)**

IDEAL CHOICE: _____

LOOKING AFTER OUR SOUL

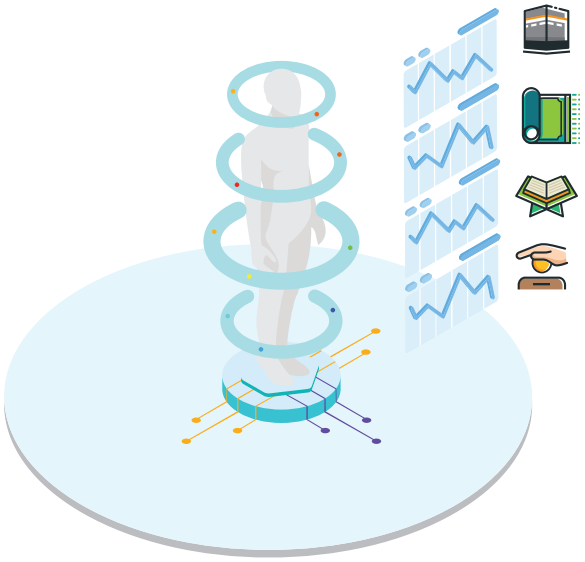
Sins

There are certain actions that hurt our soul and cause it to lean more toward evil things. These actions are the sins which Allah ﷻ has forbidden us to do. There are other actions that give pleasure to our soul, and cause it to lean toward good things. These actions are the obligations and recommendations which Allah ﷻ has ordered us to perform. Let us look at how sins affect our soul:

Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ؑ said: "Every person has a clear (spiritual) heart. When they commit a sin, a black spot contaminates their heart. If the person repents, then the blackness goes away; but if they continue to sin, then the blackness increases until it completely covers the heart up."[2]

Now that we know that sins harm our soul and cause it to become contaminated, we should be careful to look after the health of our soul. Just like we worry about which food is good for our body and which is bad, we should also worry about what is good for our soul and what is bad for it. Imām Ḥasan ؑ said that he is surprised at the person who worries about their physical food for their body, but does not worry about the immaterial food for their soul.

STOP AND REFLECT: Think about a time when you did something wrong, like disrespecting your parents, or lying to them. How did you feel afterwards? What is guilt (how would you define it) and why does it happen?



Desires

Desires are a natural part of life. We all have desires, like the desire for food, water, comfort, etc. Allah ﷻ has given us these desires in order to help us survive in this world. However, these desires are meant to be used in moderation, controlled as necessary, and kept within the Islamic guidelines. If we let our desires overcome or control us in a negative way, then this will be very harmful to our soul.

One of the problems with following our lower desires is that they will never be satisfied. One desire will lead to the another, and we never feel like we have enough. Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim ؑ said:

> "This world is like the water of the sea. No matter how much a thirsty person drinks from it, it will only make them thirstier until it kills them."[3]

People sometimes imagine that if they were to achieve a certain worldly goal, like becoming rich, popular, famous, or living in luxury, then they will be very happy. However, many people who reach these goals feel miserable because they find that they just want more and more, and no matter how much they get, they cannot seem to be happy.

Instead of focusing on following our physical desires and making this our only goal in life, we should strive more to keep our soul healthy, and make the perfection of our soul the main purpose in our life. Such a focus will give us true happiness and contentment—in both this world and the next.

2 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 70, P. 327.
3 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, P. 136; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 73, P. 79.

Activity 4.3b: Desires Fulfilled

As you have grown, the things that were most important to you have likely evolved with you as well. Starting from an early time in your childhood that you can remember, track the things that you have desired the most, and whether you were able to achieve/receive them or not. It could be a particular toy, winning a game or sports match, being recognized for a talent, etc.

AGE	THING MOST DESIRED	ACHIEVED OR UNFULFILLED

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Did you carry your unfulfilled desires forward through the years? _____
2. Every time you achieved one of your desires, did it stop you from wanting something more? _____

PROTECTING OUR SOUL

Let us protect our most precious asset, which is our soul, by keeping our desires in check and avoiding sins. This will help to keep our soul healthy. Many of the lessons in the *Akhlāq* section of our studies teach us about the conditions of our soul and the spiritual heart, and what actions can lead to the health or sickness of our soul and spiritual heart. Similarly, in the *Fiqh* lessons we learn about *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* things which can protect our soul from the harmful effects of sins, and how we can strengthen our soul by performing righteous actions.

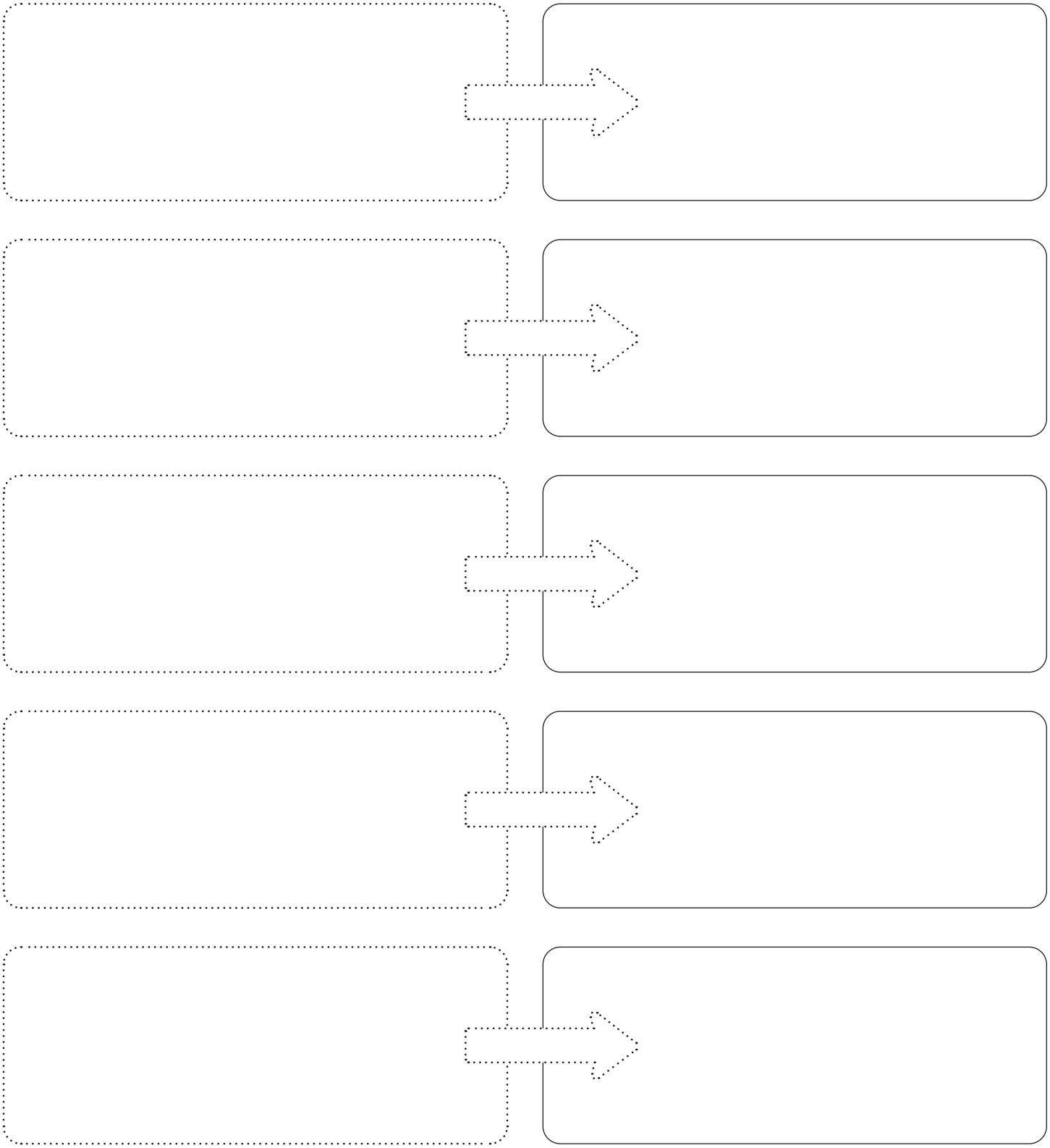
Death

Death is the separation of our soul from our body. Our body will no longer be 'me' and will become just a corpse. It will decompose, and slowly be absorbed into the earth, then become part of other things. However, the soul will continue to live and be transferred to the world of *Barzakh* (the intermediary world between this world and the next world), then to the Hereafter. When we are resurrected on the Day of Judgment, our soul and body will be reunited.

It is important to remember that death is not the end of existence. It is actually the beginning of a new life and a passage or bridge into another world. In this world, our soul continues to live and experience pain or pleasure. This is another reason why it is so important to look after our soul and protect it. Our body experiences pain or pleasure in this world for the short span of our life here, but our soul will experience pain or pleasure for a much longer time in the life after death.

Activity 4.3c: New Beginnings

Can you think of any examples from the world around you where one ending signifies a new beginning? For example, a caterpillar comes to an end in its cocoon, but a new and beautiful creature—a butterfly—emerges.



FIQH
(ISLAMIC LAWS)

CHAPTER 1

Taqlīd and Taklīf

1.1 Introduction to Taqlīd

1.2 Choosing a Marjaʿ

1.1 Introduction to Taqlīd

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify what *taqlīd* is and why it is necessary.
- Recognize how to choose a *marjaʿ* to follow.
- Recall common terms found in Islamic rulings.
- Select a *marjaʿ* using the appropriate criteria.

FATIMAH AND SAKINA LEARN ABOUT TAQLĪD

FATIMAH: Class today made me so hungry! Let's go and grab some fish and chips before we go to the masjid!

SAKINA: Mmm...that sounds good! But we will have to make sure that the fish is allowed for us (*ḥalāl*) to eat.

FATIMAH: What do you mean? Why do we have to worry about fish being *ḥalāl*? Obviously it's *ḥalāl*! We are not going to eat pork or anything like that!

SAKINA: Yes, many types of fish are *ḥalāl*, but there are also some fish that we cannot eat. Islam has certain guidelines for which fish are *ḥalāl* and which ones are not, but I can't remember what the guidelines are right now. Maybe we should ask Shaykh Ali to help us better understand which ones are okay according to our *marjaʿ*.

FATIMAH: But why do we need a *marjaʿ* to find out what we can eat? I thought that as long as we follow the Qurʾān, the Prophet ﷺ, and his Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, then we are fine!

SAKINA: Well yeah, we have to follow the Qurʾān, and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, but we cannot always understand all of the laws directly from the Qurʾān, or the traditions (*ḥadīth*) of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ because we are not experts in these things.

FATIMAH: Oh wow. I am still a little confused though. If Islam is for everyone, then how come only some people are experts?

SAKINA: Islam **is** for everyone, but not everyone is an expert in it! There is so much to know about Islam, just like healthcare. Everyone knows certain things about their health and their body, but not everyone can become a doctor, or an expert on the human body.

FATIMAH: Hmm, I guess that makes a lot of sense. But the rules cannot be all that complicated, can they? I thought Islam was an easy religion that follows our innate nature?

SAKINA: Well, I am pretty sure that Islam is not supposed to be a complicated religion, but I never really thought about that. How about we go to my house for some lunch and we can talk about it more with my mom?

FATIMAH: Sounds good to me. I love your mom's cooking!

At Sakina's House

SAKINA: Salām ʿalaykum, Mom!

FATIMAH: Salām ʿalaykum, Aunty! Thanks for having me over!

MOM: Wa ʿalaykum as-salām girls! Of course, Fatimah! I am always happy whenever you come over.

SAKINA: Mom, Fatimah and I were discussing some Islamic rulings, and we had a couple of questions that we could not figure out about following a *marjaʿ*.

MOM: Oh, nice! We actually just had a class with Shaykh Ali at the masjid on this.

SAKINA: Well basically, we know that we have to follow the Qurʾān, the Prophet ﷺ, and his Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. So if we read the Qurʾān, and some narrations (*ḥadīth*) of the Prophet ﷺ, then why do we need to follow a *marjaʿ*?

MOM: Well, we have to remember a few things. First of all, a *marjaʿ* is not reading the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* the same way we are. They spend years and years studying Islam so that they are able to understand them very deeply and accurately. Once a *marjaʿ* completes all of those years of studies, then he does his best to derive the necessary laws from the Islamic sources.

FATIMAH: How does he decide what the laws are?

MOM: A *marjaʿ* has to study the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth* of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, the Arabic language, history, biographies of the narrators, comparative law, and other sources, and he must also use his intellect and logic as well.

FATIMAH: So then what do we have to listen to a *marjaʿ* about? Everything in life?

MOM: Well, not really. We have to understand our beliefs—*ʿAqāʾid*—ourselves, like the belief in One God—Allah ﷻ, and that Allah ﷻ sent Prophets ﷺ to guide us, and that there will be a Day of Judgment. But our *marājiʿ* make sure that we know what Allah ﷻ expects from us in terms of our rules—*Aḥkām*. They try to research what Allah ﷻ wants us to do, and what we are not allowed to do. So, we need to be very careful not to follow our own opinions on these issues. Without guidance from our *marājiʿ*, we would be lost.

FATIMAH: Wow! That sounds like a lot of hard work. They spend so many years making things easier for us to understand; and then all we have to do is ask them for the answer!

MOM: Yes, exactly. Oh, look at the time! You should get going! You do not want to be late for your volunteering shift at the masjid!

AḤKĀM:
practical laws that help us practice Islam in the correct way to reach our goal

IJTIHĀD:
the science of deriving laws

MUJTAHID:
a scholar who is qualified to reliably derive an Islamic legal opinion from religious sources and evidence

MARJAʿ:
a mujtahid who can also be relied upon by others to provide an expert Islamic legal opinion

TAQLĪD:
to refer to a certain marjaʿ's ruling when it comes to our practical Islamic life

AḤKĀM: A MAP FOR PERFECTION

As Muslims, we are constantly trying to get closer to Allah ﷻ, to keep His love strong in our hearts, and to strive on the path to perfection. Out of His infinite Wisdom and Mercy, Allah ﷻ has given us a map, or a set of instructions and guidelines to follow, so that we will know how to achieve this goal. Everything in Islam is for our own benefit and leads us on this path. The guidelines regarding what is allowed and permissible (*ḥalāl*), and what is not allowed and forbidden *(ḥarām)* are called ***Aḥkām***. *Aḥkām* are those practical laws that help us practice Islam in the correct way to reach our goal.

WHY DO WE NEED SCHOLARS?

Allah ﷻ has given us two primary guides: the Qurʾān and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. After the final Prophet ﷺ passed away, Allah ﷻ sent 12 Imāms ﷺ to guide us; however since the last one is in occultation and we do not have direct access to ask him questions, we have been instructed to go to the ***ʿulamāʾ***, or religious scholars, who are our connection to the *Maʿṣūmīn* ﷺ during this time. Scholars play a very important role in conveying the knowledge of the Qurʾān and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ to us. This is why Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said:

> "The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets." [1]

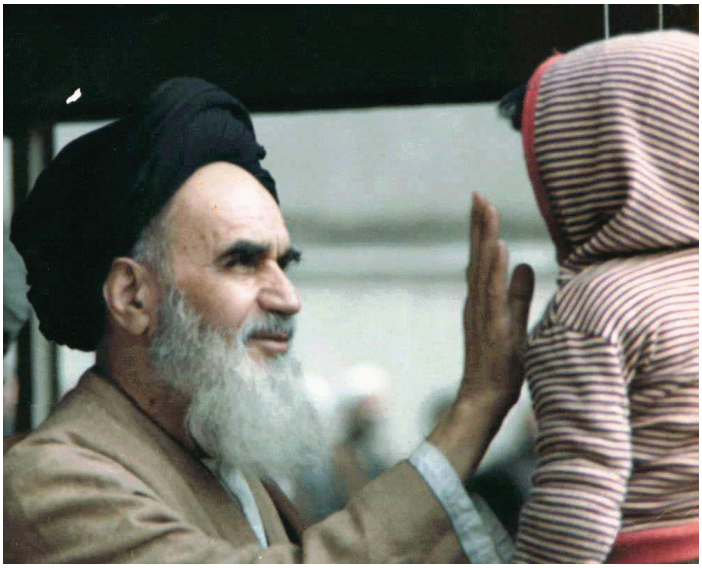
There are different levels of scholars in Islam. Some of our highest scholars spend several decades studying Islam with qualified teachers, and then they become experts. They reach a level of scholarship where they are qualified to do what is called ***ijtihād***. *Ijtihād* is the science of deriving laws. This is similar to how doctors must go through many years of medical school before they can officially be called doctors. A ***mujtahid*** is a scholar who is qualified to do *ijtihād*—meaning that they can reliably derive an Islamic legal opinion from religious sources and evidence.

1 Rayshahrī, Muḥammad, *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah,* P. 773.

Mujtahids derive Islamic laws from three primary resources:

1. The Qurʾān.
2. *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah* (traditions and actions of the *Maʿṣūmīn* ﷺ).
3. Their own *ʿaql* (intellect) and *ijmāʿ* (universal agreement of scholars).

A *mujtahid* never invents or makes up one's own Islamic laws. *Ijtihād* is a very precise and difficult process that requires a lot of knowledge and experience. As we can see above, the derivation of laws is based on authentic sources of evidence.



Āyatullāh Khomeini: an example of a scholar who dedicated his entire life to understanding, teaching, and applying Islam

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

'aql عَقْلٌ (intellect, reason, common sense)

- Arabic Root Word: ع ق ل ʿa-q-l
- Root Meaning: 'to tie up, to restrain'
- Occurrences in the Qurʾān: 49 times
- Related Words: تَعْقِلُون *(taʿqilūn)* which means 'to use reason, to understand'
- Reference for this word taʿqilūn: Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah az-Zukhruf (43), Verse 3.

MUJTAHIDS VS. MARĀJIʿ

What is the difference between a ***mujtahid*** and a ***marjaʿ***? We mentioned above that a *mujtahid* is a scholar who is qualified to do *ijtihād*—meaning that they can reliably derive an Islamic legal opinion from religious sources and evidence. A *marjaʿ* is a higher level of a *mujtahid* because they can also be relied upon by other people to provide an expert Islamic legal opinion, and whom others can refer to for Islamic rulings. Thus, all *marājiʿ* are *mujtahids*, but not all *mujtahids* are *marājiʿ*, just like how all surgeons are doctors, but not all doctors are surgeons.

MUJTAHID

a scholar who is qualified to reliably derive an Islamic legal opinion from religious sources and evidence

MARJAʿ

a higher level mujtahid who can also be relied upon by others to provide an expert Islamic legal opinion

WHAT IS TAQLĪD?

Taqlīd means 'to refer to a certain *marjaʿ*'s ruling when it comes to our practical Islamic life.' Let us look at an example to understand how important *taqlīd* is.

Imagine someone is playing in the school playground and finds some money. What are they supposed to do with it? Can they keep it, or do they have to try to find the owner of it, or should they give it to charity? In order to know the correct answer, one needs to refer to a *marjaʿ*. We can go to the *marjaʿ*'s website and see what he says about the rules of finding money on the ground, or ask a reliable scholar about the ruling. If we follow the ruling that he has given, then we will be performing *taqlīd*. However, we must be cautious that in a world in which everything is available on search engines, it is essential to gain the correct knowledge from proper sources.

There are many situations we come across every day for which we need to refer to a *marjaʿ*, therefore they play a very important role in our lives.

There are some obvious rules in Islam that everyone knows about—like the very need to say our daily prayers, and to fast in the month of Ramaḍān—for which *taqlīd* may not be necessary (because they are so obvious, although there are still some intricate rulings that one may have to refer to their *marjaʿ*). But for most issues—like how many times to say the *Tasbīḥāt al-Arbaʿah* in the third and fourth *rakaʿāt*, or other details about exactly how to pray, fast, and do different things properly in many other areas of our life—we will all need to do *taqlīd*. The one case where someone does not need to follow a *marjaʿ* is if they have studied and become an expert themselves. But imagine if everyone had to derive the detailed rulings themselves from reading and researching the entire Qurʾān and all of the *aḥādīth*! This is no easy feat! For example, the *aḥādīth* have been written in different contexts, and sometimes may even contradict one another. In the same way that we consult a health expert's opinion when we are sick, or a dentist when we have a toothache, or a mechanic for our car problems; similarly, we turn to a *marjaʿ* to help us understand Islamic issues, such as knowing exactly how to pray, fasting rules, eating regulations, and so on.

Activity 1.1a: Scenario

Ahmad is on a road trip with his family. It is time for *ṣalāh*. He remembers hearing that if a person travels outside of their hometown, they have to shorten their prayers. However, he does not know the exact details of the rulings, and how far out of town he has to be for the rules to apply.

ISLAMIC LAWS

1. Go to **https://www.sistani.org/english/book/48/2248/**

2. Find the section of Islamic Laws titled "Prayers of a Traveller." Click on this link and answer Ahmad's question about praying while out of town. What is the shortened prayer called, and how many miles from his hometown does Ahmad have to be in order to begin shortening his prayers?

1.2 Choosing a Marjaʿ

At the Masjid

HAMIDAH: Salāmun ʿalaykum, Sisters! How is everything?

SAKINA: ʿAlaykum salām, Sister Hamidah. We have a question about *taqlīd*.

HAMIDAH: Sure! What would you like to know?

SAKINA: Well, long story short, we are trying to figure out how you pick a *marjaʿ*. How do you know who you should follow?

HAMIDAH: Well, there are certain guidelines to help us define who can be a *marjaʿ*. A *marjaʿ* must have the following qualities: he must be mature (*bāligh*), sane (*ʿāqil*) which means that his mind is healthy and sound, a twelver Shīʿah born of legitimate birth, and living. He must also be just (*ʿādil*), brave, and God-conscious (*muttaqī*); and last, but definitely not least, he needs to have the knowledge and intellectual ability to derive laws.

FATIMAH: That is a lot of qualifications!

HAMIDAH: Yes, and there is more! He must be obedient to the commands of Allah ﷻ, and be someone who is aware of the conditions of the time.

FATIMAH: Conditions of the time…like, he has to know what is happening around the world today?

HAMIDAH: Yes, exactly!

SAKINA: How would you define a 'just' *marjaʿ*? What does that mean?

HAMIDAH: Good question! When we say that a *marjaʿ* must be just, it means that he must have good character, and perform those things which are obligatory (*wājib*), and stay away from those things that are forbidden (*ḥarām*).

FATIMAH: Wow! If he can fulfill all of that, then he is definitely someone we should listen to!

SAKINA: So, who is a *marjaʿ*? How do we find him?

HAMIDAH: There are many different *marājiʿ* at the present time. Most of them study in cities like Qum and Najaf, the global centers of Islamic studies.

FATIMAH: Do we have to follow the rulings of all of the *marājiʿ*?

HAMIDAH: You must follow the one who is the most knowledgeable.

FATIMAH: So, who might that be?

HAMIDAH: Well, right now the *marājiʿ* who are among the most knowledgeable ones, and followed by a majority of the world's Shīʿahs are: Āyatullāh ʿAlī Ḥusaynī Sīstānī, Āyatullāh ʿAlī Ḥusaynī Khamenei, Āyatullāh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī, Āyatullāh Waḥīd Khurāsānī, Āyatullāh Mūsā Shubayrī Zanjānī, Āyatullāh Muḥammad Isḥāq Fayyāḍ, Āyatullāh Muḥammad Saʿīd Ḥakīm, and Āyatullāh Bashīr Ḥusayn Najafī. But, we all have to go through the right process in order to identify which one to follow.

FATIMAH: How do you do that?

HAMIDAH: You can ask your parents if you are certain that they have done their research on who is the most knowledgeable. But it is best to consult our scholars, such as Shaykh Ali, just like you would ask a doctor to refer you to a good specialist.

FATIMAH: What does researching a *marjaʿ* mean? Like, seeing how many years he studied?

HAMIDAH: It is much more than just about the amount of years that they studied. The scholars who are close to these *marājiʿ* have a better idea about who might be the most knowledgeable one from them all. If there are multiple *marājiʿ* who are all equally knowledgeable, then we can pick anyone from among them.

SAKINA: Okay, so once we identify the most knowledgeable *marjaʿ*, how do we find out about his rulings?

HAMIDAH: There are a few ways that you can find out. You can look in a book of his collected rulings, for example in his Islamic Laws book. These days, our *marājiʿ* have official websites with the rulings published on them. But whatever resource you use, you must be certain that they are the accurate rulings of the *marjaʿ* whom you follow. You should also make sure that you have understood the law correctly by checking it with someone who has proper knowledge in case there are some rulings that might be difficult to comprehend.

FATIMAH: Can we email our *marājiʿ*?

HAMIDAH: Yes you can, most of them have representatives who will answer your emails, and even reply to your texts as well.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Sr. Hamidah defined a just *marjaʿ* as "someone who must have good character, and perform those things that are *wājib* and stay away from those things that are *ḥarām*." Why is the character of a *marjaʿ* whom we follow so important? Do you think having a leader of good moral character and just actions really makes a difference in the life of a follower? Why or why not? Pair up with another student and discuss your thoughts. Write down one question or thought you would like to ask/share with the class.

CHOOSING A MARJAʿ

Now that we have understood the importance of referring to a highly qualified scholar, it is essential to also understand how to choose a *marjaʿ*. There are three main ways for us to know which *marjaʿ* to follow:

1. A person (such as a learned scholar of Islam) may have the qualifications to identify a *mujtahid* on their own.
2. One can ask two just and learned people who are qualified to identify the most knowledgeable *mujtahid*. An example of such a person may be a senior scholar in your community. If two such people confirm that someone is the most learned *marjaʿ*, then one can follow this person as their *marjaʿ*.
3. If a number of people who are learned and qualified to identify a *mujtahid* state that a particular person is the most knowledgeable *marjaʿ*, then we can follow this person as our *marjaʿ*.

SOME IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

After we have found a *marjaʿ* to follow, when we want to find out whether we should perform a certain action or stay away from it, we need to refer to our *marjaʿs* website or book to find out what his ruling is on that particular issue. When we look at these resources, we can then check our understanding with someone knowledgeable because sometimes it is possible to misunderstand a ruling. There are also some words that we will come across while doing this, which we need to know the meanings of:

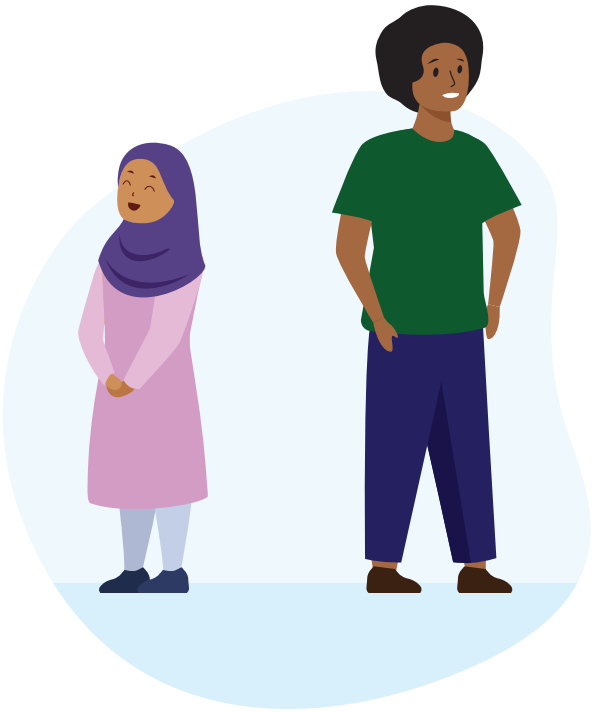
WĀJIB (OBLIGATORY): This is an action that must be performed; if a person performs it, then one will be rewarded; but if someone neglects to do it, then they have committed a sin and will be punished accordingly.
Examples: *praying our daily ṣalāh, fasting in the month of Ramaḍān, observing the necessary ḥijāb, etc.*

MUSTAḤAB (RECOMMENDED): This is an action that is not compulsory *(wājib)*, but it is very much loved by Allah ﷻ, earns His pleasure, and strengthens a human being's faith. If a person performs it, one will be rewarded immensely by Allah ﷻ, but there is no penalty if it is not performed.
Examples: *doing dhikr, saying adhān before the daily prayers, greeting another person by saying salām, etc.*

MAKRŪH (DISLIKED): This is an action that is better if not performed, but by performing it, one will not have any punishment in the hereafter; however, there may be spiritual consequences. Staying away from things that are makrūh attains reward.
Examples: *eating horse meat, overeating, wearing black shoes, etc.*
Note: *Sometimes, when the word makrūh is used, it does not mean that the action is better not to perform. Rather, it means that doing this action will result in less reward than usual. For example, praying Ṣalāt al-Jamāʿah behind someone who is a traveler is makrūh, meaning that one will not receive as much reward as one would receive if the imām was not a traveler; but it does not mean that it is better to pray alone!*

ḤARĀM (PROHIBITED OR FORBIDDEN): This is an action that must not be performed at all, and if a person does it knowingly, then they will have to face the punishments in this world or the hereafter (unless one sincerely repents, and with Allah's Mercy the sin is forgiven).
Examples: *lying, stealing, eating pork, etc.*

MUBĀḤ (PERMISSIBLE): This is an action which a person is allowed to perform, and one neither receives a reward, nor a punishment.
Examples: *sleeping, eating, walking, etc.*
These actions can often be turned into another category depending on certain criteria. For example, drinking water or going for a walk for the sake of Allah ﷻ so that one can take care of oneself and be able to worship Him can become a mustaḥab action. Or if a person eats too much food and gets sick, this could be makrūh or maybe even ḥarām.



THE AGE OF RESPONSIBILITY (TAKLĪF)

A person needs to start following the rules in Islam, as outlined by a *marjaʿ*, when one reaches the age of responsibility—known in Arabic as *taklīf*. The age of *taklīf* is the age when an individual becomes responsible for all of the actions that one performs, at which time one must fulfill all of the obligatory actions (*wājibāt*), and stay away from all of the forbidden things (*muḥarramāt*). A person who has reached the age of responsibility (*taklīf*) or maturity (*bulūgh*) is called a *mukallaf*—for a boy, or *mukallafah*—for a girl. At this point, the angels begin to record ALL of our actions—whether good or bad—in our book of deeds, which will be shown to us in the next world.

A person who has reached the age of *taklīf* has attained a great honor! One may ask: Why? It is at this time in our life that Allah ﷻ is inviting us to attain the honor of worshiping Him. Allah ﷻ says that at this time, we are able to get to know Him and serve Him with all our actions. We usually try to impress and do as much as we can for a best friend or someone we think is extremely important. What about trying to impress and serve the One who created us, protects us, provides everything for us, and guides us so caringly throughout our entire life?

Activity 1.2a: Common Terms

Match the rulings from Āyatullāh Sīstānī's website on the right side column to the correct term on the left:

WĀJIB	•	• *Ruling 1077.* The following things are recommended when performing *sajdah*: 1. Saying *takbīr* before going into *sajdah*. For someone who performs prayers while standing, this should be performed after one has raised one's head from *rukūʿ* and has stood perfectly straight. 4. When in *sajdah*, a person should join one's fingers together, and place them in line with one's ears such that the tips of the fingers face *qiblah*.
ḤARĀM	•	• *Ruling 1627.* Some things which are disapproved for a fasting person to do include: 4. Smelling aromatic plants. 8. Having one's teeth extracted, or doing anything that causes blood to come out of the mouth.
MUSTAḤAB	•	• *Ruling 1707.* Fasting on Eid al-Fiṭr and Eid al-Aḍḥā is unlawful (not permitted). Furthermore, if one does not know whether it is the last day of Shaʿbān, or the first day of the month of Ramaḍān and fasts with the intention of it being the first day of the month of Ramaḍān, then it is unlawful.
MAKRŪH	•	• It is obligatory for a follower to learn the rulings which are of daily importance.

Activity 1.2b: Reviewing what you know

1. Do you know the name of a *marjaʿ* or more than one *marjaʿ*? List the name(s) below.

2. Can you think of a scholar whom you can ask to recommend a *marjaʿ* for you?

Activity 1.2c: Selecting a Marjaʿ

Using the steps we discussed, let us work together to select a *marjaʿ* whom you can follow in your life.

1. Talk to your parents, a scholar, or any knowledgeable person to help you identify who the most knowledgeable *marjaʿ* of the time is:

_____

2. Do some research on the life of the *marjaʿ* you will be doing *taqlīd* of. Write about a story, or fact about his life that interests you. Be sure to cite the resources you use for your research.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

www.sistani.org

www.leader.ir/en

www.makarem/ir

Now that you have picked a *marjaʿ*, get familiar with where and how you can find his rulings. Most *marājiʿ* have an Islamic Laws book, as well as a website for easy reference to rulings, or a section on questions and answers. You can also submit your own questions through these sites. Here are the websites for three *marājiʿ*; if your *marjaʿ* is not listed, then see if you can find his website or book—ask your teacher or scholar for help if you are having trouble.

- **http://www.sistani.org/english/** (This is the website for Āyatullāh Sīstānī. *Jurisprudence Made Easy* is a good book to start with; Islamic Laws is more detailed and can be used as a reference when needed).
- **https://www.leader.ir/en** (This is the website for Āyatullāh Khamenei).
- **https://www.makarem.ir/** (This is the website for Āyatullāh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī. Click on English)

3. Once you locate a website or a book, find an answer to a question that you may have had, or look up a topic that your teacher suggests such as: *ḥijāb*, music, *najāsah*, etc. Pay attention to the detail and the depth of the answers which have been given by your *marjaʿ*. Do you think that the *marjaʿ* came to these answers or rulings easily? Explain why or why not.

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CHAPTER 2

Purity and Spirituality

2.1 Purity (Ṭahārah) and Impurity (Najāsah)

2.2 Wuḍūʾ, Ghusl, and Tayammum

2.1 Purity (Ṭahārah) and Impurity (Najāsah)

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify five of the main impure things (*najāsāt*), and the conditions for how they transfer.
- Determine that certainty (*yaqīn*) is required for something to be considered impure (*najis*).
- Illustrate how to clean and purify common impurities with water.
- Use and apply related *ṭahārah* and *najāsah* terms.

ṬĀHIR: ritually pure

ṬAHĀRAH: ritual purity

NAJIS: ritually impure

NAJĀSAH: ritual impurity

ʿAYN AN-NAJIS: 'inherently impure things

YAQĪN: certainty

Cleanliness is a very important part of Islam. When we say something is clean, we generally mean that it is free from dirt. For example, if we wash a shirt that has dirt or food stains on it, we would consider it to be *physically* clean. In Islam, physical cleanliness is different from ritual purity, but they do go hand-in-hand to some extent. Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān:

وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَّهِّرِينَ *And Allah loves those who purify themselves.*[1]

CLEANLINESS VS. RITUAL PURITY (ṬAHĀRAH)

The word used in the above verse is ***muṭṭahhirīn***. These are the people who become 'ritually pure' known in Arabic as ***ṭāhir***. It is important to note that there is a difference between cleanliness and ritual purity—***ṭahārah***. Some things can be both clean and ritually pure (*ṭāhir*). For example, a freshly washed shirt can be both clean and ritually pure (*ṭāhir*) if the washing conditions have been met. On the other hand, something can be ritually pure (*ṭāhir*), but it may not be clean. For example, if you have mud on your shirt, it is not clean, but it is still considered as ritually pure (*ṭāhir*). Or you may have a shirt that just came out of the washing machine and it is clean, but then you get some blood on it, so it is no longer ritually pure (*ṭāhir*).

The opposite of *ṭāhir* is ***najis*** which means 'ritually impure.' Just like the terms 'clean' and '*ṭāhir*' differ in meaning (as explained above), so do the terms 'dirty' and '*najis*.' A thing can be clean, but that does not make it *ṭāhir*. For example, a freshly bathed dog may be clean, but it is not *ṭāhir*, it remains *najis*.

InshāʾAllāh, in the following lessons, we will delve deeper into the principles of ritual purity (*ṭahārah*) and ritual impurity (*najāsah*), and take an in-depth look on how to make impure (*najis*) objects pure (*ṭāhir*).

WHEN DOES SOMETHING BECOME NAJIS?

It is good to always be in a state of ritual purity—*ṭahārah* (i.e., not be *najis* in any way), but if you have to perform certain actions that require *ṭahārah*, such as the daily prayers (*ṣalāh*), then it becomes necessary to purify yourself if you or your clothes, etc. have become impure (*najis*). Therefore, we must take a look at the rules about how to make something ritually pure (*ṭāhir*) if it has become impure. First however, we have to learn how to determine if something is *najis* or has become *najis*. When it comes to *najāsah* and *ṭahārah*, there is a golden rule that we must keep in mind (that actually makes life much easier as well). This rule is:

> Everything is ritually pure *(ṭāhir)* unless you know (with certainty—*yaqīn*) that it is *najis*!

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah at-Tawbah (9), Verse 108.

Yaqīn means certainty—therefore, you must be certain and sure that something has become *najis*. For instance, you saw an item become *najis* with your own eyes. Let us say as an example, you accidentally cut yourself and see the blood drip onto the floor, then you know for certain that the floor has become *najis*.

If you are not completely certain that something is *najis*, then you should consider it to be *ṭāhir*. For example, the bathroom floor might be wet, but that does not mean that it is *najis*. Or, if a baby's pants are wet, it does not necessarily mean that they are *najis*.

ʿAyn an-Najāsah

There are certain objects that are inherently impure and cannot be purified through any means; in fact, they can even make other things impure upon contact. These objects are called ***ʿayn an-najis***, which means 'inherently impure things.' Something that is usually pure (*ṭāhir*), like your body, clothing, or floor, can become impure (*najis*) through contact with an *ʿayn an-najis* thing under certain conditions.

The main objects that are *ʿayn an-najis* that you are likely to come across are (there are other things, but we will only mention these five here):

- Pigs and products derived from pigs
- Urine
- Feces
- Blood
- Dogs

HOW IS NAJĀSAH TRANSFERRED?

When something that is impure (*najis*) comes into contact with something that is pure (*ṭāhir*), the *ṭāhir* thing becomes temporarily *najis*, which in Arabic is called ***mutanajjis***, and must be purified. However, the impurity (*najāsah*) will only be transferred if either of the two things is wet or moist to the point that it will transfer its wetness to the other object. If both things are dry, then the *najāsah* will not spread. For example, if a dog rubs itself against your pants, and both the dog and your pants are dry, then your pants will not become *najis*. However, if either your pants or the dog are wet or moist to the point that wetness transfers, then that part of your pants will become *najis*. Similarly, if a dog's hair is left on your pants and later your pants become wet for whatever reason, then they will become *najis* because of the hair.

HOW TO MAKE NAJIS OBJECTS ṬĀHIR AGAIN

So, now we know how to deem if something is *najis* or *ṭāhir*. Once we are certain that something has become *najis*, we must know how to make it *ṭāhir* once again; and in order to do this, we must use one of the purifying agents referred to in Arabic as ***muṭahhirāt***.

The most common *muṭahhirāt* is water, as long as it meets the following criteria:

1. The water itself must be pure (*ṭāhir*).
2. The water must be ***muṭlaq***, or pure (and unadulterated), in the meaning that it should not be mixed with something else (if it is mixed with something then it is referred to in Arabic as ***muḍāf***). This means that one would use the word 'water' to describe it. For example, if you have a glass of water and add a packet of Kool-Aid to it, then the water is now mixed, so one would not call it water anymore. On the contrary, river water may have some dirt, rocks, or insects in it, but one would still call it water, so it would not be considered *muḍāf* or mixed. Similarly, water that may have a slight flavor, smell, or color to it, like sea water or pool water that has some chlorine, is also considered *muṭlaq*, because it is still called 'water.'

So, how can water make something *ṭāhir*? In general, the following two things must happen:

3. The object should be washed with plain water until the water that flows off from the object being washed is also considered plain water, and not water that is mixed with *najāsah*. In other words, the smell, color, and taste of the water should no longer change as it flows off from the object being washed. For example, if a person is washing blood off of a shirt, it should be washed until the water dripping off from the shirt is no longer red or pink-colored.
4. The particles of the *najāsah* (e.g., blood, urine, etc.) should not remain on the object after it has been washed. If microscopic particles remain or some smell or color remains, like a leftover blood stain after the blood has been washed away, then this is okay and the object is still considered *ṭāhir*.

CATEGORIES OF WATER

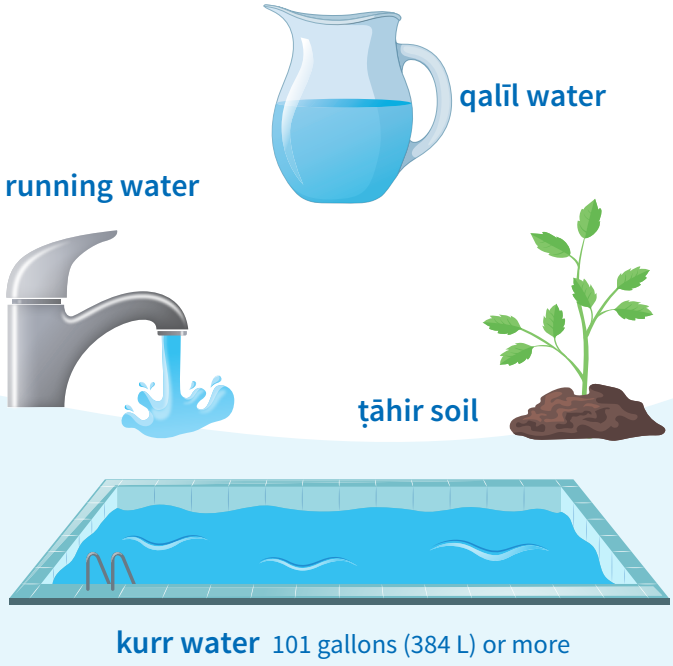
We mentioned that we usually use water to make something *ṭāhir* again. In general, it is important to remember that there are two categories of water when it comes to Islamic rulings:

QALĪL OR NON-RUNNING WATER: this is still water that is less than 384 Litres (101 US Gallons) in volume. For example:

- Water in a water bottle.
- Water in a small pot or kettle.
- Water in a jug used in the bathroom.

KURR OR RUNNING WATER: this refers to water that is running or flowing, or still water that is more than 384 Litres (101 US Gallons) in volume. For example:

- Water in a river or lake.
- Water from a tap or hose.



SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS ON MAKING THINGS ṬĀHIR

The following table gives more specific instructions about how to make certain *najis* objects *ṭāhir* again.

EXAMPLE OF NAJĀSAH	PROCESS FOR MAKING IT ṬĀHIR
Najis things in general	Wash it until the *ʿayn an-najāsah* is removed, and the water flowing off of the object is pure.
Body/clothes made najis by urine	**Running or *Kurr* water:** Washing it once is sufficient after the *ʿayn an-najāsah* is removed. **Non-running or *Qalīl* water:** Must be washed twice after the *ʿayn an-najāsah* is removed. In both cases, clothes should be squeezed after washing.
Rugs/carpets made najis by urine	**Running or *Kurr* water:** Washing it once is sufficient after the *ʿayn an-najāsah* is removed. Pressure should be applied to that area of the rug/carpet so it is squeezed out. **Non-running or *Qalīl* water:** Must be washed twice after the *ʿayn an-najāsah* is removed, and then the water must be squeezed out each time.
Interior of a container (e.g., pot, bowl, plate).	**Āyatullāh Sīstānī:** Wash it three times as an obligatory precaution, whether using *qalīl*, *kurr*, or running water. **Āyatullāh Khamenei:** Wash it three times if using *qalīl* water, and once if using *kurr* or running water.
A utensil that a dog licks or drinks from	The inside should be scrubbed with *ṭāhir* soil. Then, the soil should be taken out and the utensil should be washed three times with water.

TERMINOLOGY REVIEW

Najis	Ritually impure.
Ṭāhir	Ritually pure.
Muṭahhir	Purifying agent that can make a *najis* thing *ṭāhir* again.
Mutanajjis	When something is inherently *ṭāhir*, but becomes *najis* because of coming into contact with a *najis* thing.
Kurr water	A body of water whose volume is equivalent to a cube that is 3.5 hand spans wide, long, and deep, or about 384 Litres or 101 US Gallons.
Qalīl water	Water that is not running and is less than *kurr*.

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION | Mā' مَآء (water)

- Arabic Root Word: م و ه m-w-h
- Root Meaning: Water
- Occurrences in the Noble Qur'ān: 63 times
- Reference: Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (21), Verse 30

RULES OF EMPTYING THE BLADDER AND BOWELS

The following are the rules for making oneself *ṭāhir* after emptying the bladder or bowels:

URINE	The urinary outlet does not become pure *(ṭāhir)* with anything other than water.
	Āyatullāh Sīstānī: It is sufficient to wash the area once, regardless of the volume or type of water (*kurr*, *qalīl*, or running water). However, the recommended precaution is to wash the area twice, and better yet it to wash three times.
	Āyatullāh Khamenei: The obligatory precaution is to wash it twice.
FECES	If water is being used to purify oneself, then one must wash enough to ensure that no trace of feces remains. However, there is no harm if there is a slight color or smell that lingers. If washed thoroughly in the first instance, leaving behind no particles of stool, then this is sufficient.

It is not permissible to have one's front or back toward the *qiblah* while relieving oneself. Knowing the direction of the *qiblah* is therefore necessary before using the restroom.

It is obligatory *(wājib)* for a person to cover one's private parts when using the bathroom from people who are religiously mature *(bāligh)*, even if they are *maḥram* to the person. It is also recommended *(mustaḥab)* to always use the restroom while sitting down.

Activity 2.1a: Ṭahārah and Najāsah Review Worksheet

MATCH the Term on the left with the correct Example on the right.

TERM		EXAMPLE
Qalīl water	•	• A swimming pool
Muṭahhir	•	• My pants after a dog licks them
Najis	•	• Pure water
Mutanajjis	•	• Blood
Kurr water	•	• A bowl of water

Activity 2.1b: Am I Ṭāhir or Najis?

Apply the correct rule to each scenario below in order to make the *najis* thing *ṭāhir* once again.

5. Fatima is studying at her non-Muslim friend's house and wants to pray. She is not sure if the floor of her friend's room is *ṭāhir* or *najis*. What should she do in this situation?

6. Zahid is with his family at the shopping mall and needs to use the restroom. Since he does not have a water bottle, he uses only tissues to clean himself. Is Zahid *ṭāhir*? Why or why not?

7. While playing soccer, Ali falls on his knees, and they start to bleed, and the blood transfers onto his shorts. By the time he gets home, the blood on his shorts has become dry, and as he is trying to put his shorts in the laundry basket, they fall on the ground. Is the ground now *najis* since it came into contact with the dry shorts that had blood on them? How should Ali make his shorts *ṭāhir* again before putting them into the laundry basket?

8. Ahmad was playing soccer with his friends, and his legs and clothing became muddy. Does he have to make his clothes *ṭāhir*, or are they just dirty?

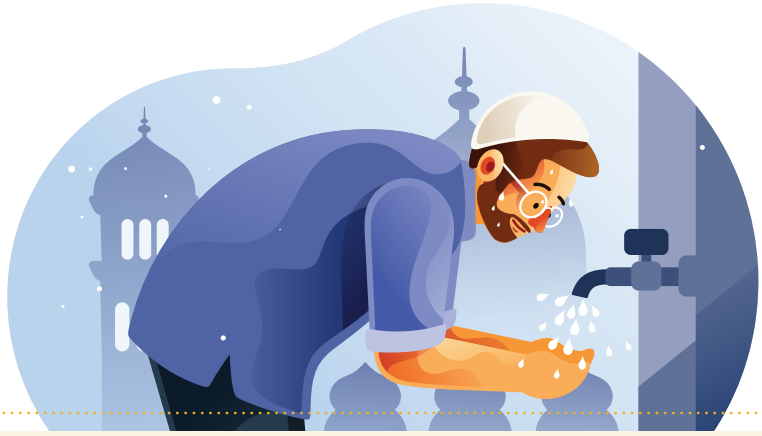
9. Hasan is at the beach swimming away, and notices that another swimmer has brought his dog into the water with him. Is the beach water now *najis*? Why or why not?

2.2 Wuḍūʾ, Ghusl, and Tayammum

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify when it is *wājib*, and *mustaḥab* to be in *wuḍūʾ*.
- List the conditions of *wuḍūʾ*, and actions that invalidate a person's *wuḍūʾ*.
- Identify how and when to do *ghusl irtimāsī* and *ghusl tartībī*.
- Recognize when and how to do *tayammum*.



Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُؤُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ

O you who have faith! When you stand up for prayer, wash your face and (wash) your hands up to the elbows, and wipe a part of your head and (wipe) feet up to the ankles.[1]

From this verse, we understand that before our daily prayers (*ṣalāh*), Allah ﷻ tells us to wash and wipe parts of our bodies in a certain way. This is called ***wuḍūʾ***. The word *wuḍūʾ*, in Arabic, literally means 'cleanliness.' By performing *wuḍūʾ*, a person attains 'spiritual purity/cleanliness' and is able to prepare oneself for certain acts of worship by cleansing both the body and the soul. Later, we will learn about *ghusl*, which is another way of attaining spiritual purity; and *tayammum*, which is done in certain cases when there is no water available, or if water is harmful for a person to use, and other situations where a person cannot perform *wuḍūʾ* and/or *ghusl* as necessary.

Practical Demonstration of Wuḍūʾ

https://youtu.be/HFwMLNE90oQ

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

Qumtum قُمْتُمْ (you stand up)

- Arabic Root Word: قوم q-w-m
- Root Meaning: Standing
- Occurrences in the Noble Qurʾān: 660 times
- Related Words: إِقَامَ (iqāma) to establish
  NOTE: adding a تُم to the end of an Arabic root word adds the word "you" to it.
- Reference for the word إِقَامَ (iqāma): Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ (21), Verse 73.
- Common phrases:

  قَدْ قَامَتِ الصَّلَاةُ (in iqāmah):
  "Indeed the prayer has been established."

  القائم (Al-Qāim): Title of Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله فرجه الشريف,
  "The one who stands up/The upriser"

  بِحَوْلِ اللهِ وَ قُـوَّتِهِ أَقُومُ وَ أَقْـعُدُ (in ṣalāh):
  "With the help and power of Allah, I stand up and sit down."

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Māʾidah (5), Verse 6.

WHEN TO PERFORM WUḌŪʾ

There are certain instances in which it is **compulsory** *(wājib)* to be in the state of *wuḍūʾ*. They are as follows:

- When performing any *ṣalāh* (prayers)
- If one wants to touch the actual script of the Noble Qurʾān
- In order to perform *wājib ṭawāf* around the Kaʿbah
- Before one can touch the Names of Allah ﷻ in any language
- According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, it is *iḥtiyāṭ wājib* (obligatory precaution) not to touch the name of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and Ahlul Bayt ﷺ without being in a state of ritual purity *(ṭaḥārah)*. According to Āyatullāh Sīstānī, it is *iḥtiyāṭ mustaḥab* (recommended precaution) to avoid doing so. Since Āyatullāh Khamenei has given an obligatory precaution on this issue, a person can follow the ruling of Āyatullāh Sīstānī.

There are certain instances when it is **recommended** to be in a state of *wuḍūʾ*. Some of these include:

- Before performing any acts of worship, such as reciting *duʿās, ziyārāt,* etc.
- Before going to sleep
- When studying
- When reciting the Qurʾān
- When going to the *ziyārah* of any of the *Maʿṣūmīn* ﷺ
- Touching the names of the *Maʿṣūmīn* ﷺ in any language
- All of the time when it is possible

اِمَام الصَّادِق ﷺ: مَنْ تَطَهَّرَ ثُمَّ أَوَى إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ بَاتَ وَ فِرَاشُهُ كَمَسْجِدِهِ

Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ: "A person who performs wuḍūʾ before going to sleep, their bed will be like a masjid [in which one is worshiping throughout the night]."[2]

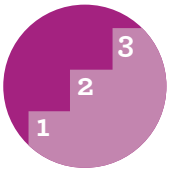
2 Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, *Wasāʾil ash-Shīʿah*, Vol. 1, P. 378.

Activity 2.2a: Challenge Accepted

In pairs, build two separate acronyms or mnemonics to help remember when it is *wājib* to be in *wuḍūʾ,* and when it is *mustaḥab*. Present these to the class, and vote on who made the best one!

permission for water and place

ṭāhir body parts

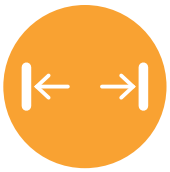


correct order

intention: proximity to Allah ﷻ

no barrier

pure and ṭāhir water



no long gaps between steps

without help

water must not be harmful

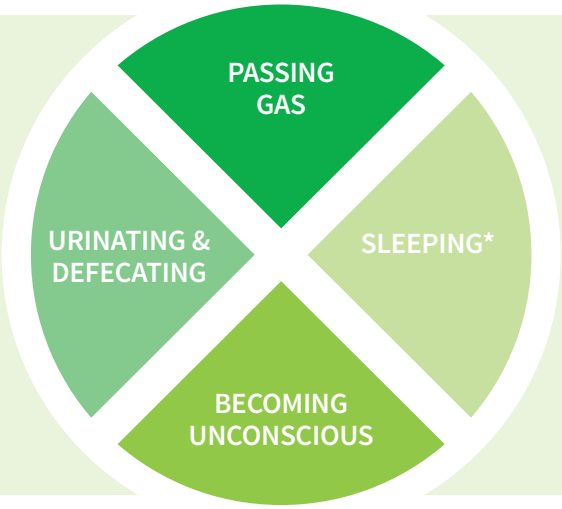
CONDITIONS OF WUḌŪʾ

When performing *wuḍūʾ*, we should have the intention in our mind that we are performing *wuḍūʾ* in obedience to the command of Allah ﷻ, and to gain nearness to Him. We must also ensure that the following ten conditions are met:

1. The water we use and the place we are doing *wuḍūʾ* are *mubāḥ*—which means that we must have permission to use them. We should also be careful not to waste water.
2. The water we use must be pure *(muṭlaq)*, meaning that it should not mixed with anything.
3. The water we use must be *ṭāhir* (ritually clean, not *najis*).
4. Before we start *wuḍūʾ*, the body parts we will wash or wipe during *wuḍūʾ* must be *ṭāhir*—free from any kind of impurity *(najāsah)*. So, if a person has a cut on their arm that still has some blood on it, they need to wash the blood off. This is not necessary for the parts that are not washed in *wuḍūʾ*, such as your shoulder or upper leg, but you must wash this before offering *ṣalāh*, unless it is from an open wound that has not yet healed.
5. You must observe *muwālāt*, which means that you cannot have any long gaps between the different stages of *wuḍūʾ*.
6. We must follow the proper *tartīb*, which means that you must perform the actions of *wuḍūʾ* in the correct order (this will be discussed in the next section).
7. We must perform *wuḍūʾ* by ourselves. No one can help us in getting the water to our face or arms, or with washing or wiping (unless due to medical reasons or absolute necessity you require someone to help you—details can be found in the books of Jurisprudence).
8. We should perform *wuḍūʾ* with the intention of attaining proximity to Allah ﷻ and obeying Him.
9. Using water must not be harmful for us. If water is harmful to us, then we need to use other methods to achieve *ṭahārah*.
10. There must not be an obstruction for water to reach the parts of the body on which *wuḍūʾ* is performed. Things like paint, make-up, or nail polish—which cause a barrier—must be removed.

ACTIONS THAT INVALIDATE WUḌŪʾ

A person remains in the state of *wuḍūʾ* until they perform one of the actions that breaks one's *wuḍūʾ*. If any one of these occur, a person must repeat their *wuḍūʾ* before doing anything else that requires *wuḍūʾ*. Some of these actions are:



*Sleeping such that one's eyes do not see, and one's ears do not hear

Activity 2.2b: Conditions of Wuḍūʾ

1. Reflect on the first condition of *wuḍūʾ*: we cannot use anyone else's water unless we first seek permission, nor can we be wasteful. Why is this important? How can we extend this thinking into our lives, and the overall understanding of this world?

2. Categorize the conditions of *wuḍūʾ* into the following 3 headings:

   The Water

   The Person

   The Actions

GHUSL

There are two types of ablutions in Islam: *wuḍūʾ* and *ghusl*. We already talked about *wuḍūʾ*, which is a partial washing/wiping of the body. The other type of ablution is called ***ghusl***. The word *ghusl* in Arabic literally means 'the purity that a person attains after washing and removing dirt from something.' The jurisprudential *(fiqh)* definition of *ghusl* is 'washing the entire body in a certain manner with the intention of becoming closer to Allah ﷻ.' By performing *ghusl*, a person attains spiritual purity. Thus, *ghusl* is an important part of worship *(ʿibādah),* and the validity of certain aspects of the religion depend on this.

HOW DO WE PERFORM GHUSL?

Ghusl can be performed in two ways: ***irtimāsī*** or ***tartībī***. *Irtimāsī* is when a person submerges one's entire body underwater all at once. This can be difficult to do, so it is less common. We usually do *ghusl tartībī*, which means sequentially, where the parts of the body are washed in a certain order. The conditions and manner for *ghusl tartībī* are the following:

REMOVE BARRIERS & IMPURITIES

A person needs to ensure that one's body is free from any impurity or barrier that would block water from reaching the actual skin/body. A barrier in this case would be anything that prevents water from reaching an area.

- *Examples of barriers are: nail polish (even breathable ones), paint, band-aids, etc. Henna or ink that has been absorbed into the skin are not considered barriers because the skin is not covered by them.*

MAKE INTENTION

Make the intention of performing *ghusl* for the sake of obeying and attaining closeness to Allah ﷻ.

- *The intention does not have to be said out loud, as long as you know what you are doing and why you are doing it.*

STEP OUT OF WATER

If you are already in the shower, you need to step out of the flow of the water and then step back in when you intend to start your *ghusl*. When moving on to the next part of the *ghusl*, it is again important to step out of the shower and step back in for the next part. This particular rule is the ruling of Āyatullāh Sīstānī and is per obligatory precaution. Therefore, you can refer to the rulings of other *marājiʿ* who do not require this movement out and back into the flow of water.

WASH HEAD AND NECK

Wash the head and neck, making sure that the water reaches every part.

- *Some marājiʿ say that it is better to run your hands over all parts of the body.*
- *There is no need to go inside of the ears or nose when washing your head.*
- *As you stand under the shower head, there is no problem if the rest of your body gets wet with your neck.*
- *Short hair that is considered part of the body must be washed. For long hair:*
  - ▷ *According to Āyatullāh Sīstānī, It is not obligatory to wash long hair.*
  - ▷ *According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, as per obligatory precaution, long hair must be washed.*

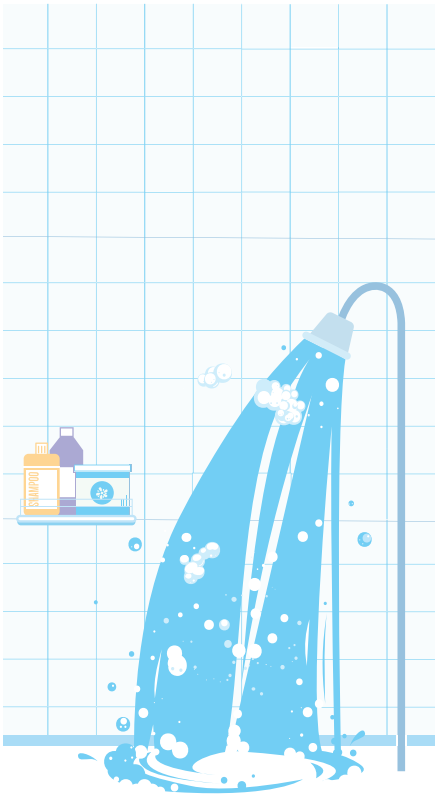
WASH BODY

Wash the body.

- *According to Āyatullāh Sīstānī, after washing the head, one can simply wash the entire body. There is no need to wash the right side, then the left. However, it is better to wash the right side first.*
- *According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, as per obligatory precaution, the right side must be washed first, and then the left side.*
- *When washing the body, we should make sure that water reaches every part of the body (a person can be under the shower and water can be reaching all places, but if they are making the intention for the right side and then the left side, they must step out of the flow of the water between the two parts).*

TIPS FOR GHUSL TARTĪBĪ:

- While washing each section of the body, it is best if you wash a bit extra to make sure that you have completely washed the part that is necessary (e.g., as you are washing the right side, wash a little bit of your left side as well).
- It is better to wash central areas (e.g., entire belly button and private parts) with each side of the body.
- Unlike *wuḍūʾ*, when washing a particular part, you do **not** need to wash from the top to bottom, or use your hands to wash over that part.
- Unlike *wuḍūʾ*, continuity is **not** a condition. So, if you wash your head and neck, then decide to shampoo your hair, and then wash your right side, that is acceptable. It also means that if you miss a part of the left side and realize later, you can wash that part again after the *ghusl* without restarting all over again. According to Āyatullāh Sīstānī, even if you miss a part of the right side and realize later, you can wash that part again after the *ghusl* without having to restart.
- If you realize after *ghusl* that you missed a part of your body, then you have to restart from that point. For example, if you come out of the shower and realize that you missed your right hand, you should:
  - ▷ According to Āyatullāh Sīstānī: wash your right hand, but then you do not need to wash the left side of the body again afterwards.
  - ▷ According to Āyatullāh Khamenei: wash your right hand only, then your left side fully all over again.



WHEN IS GHUSL PERFORMED?

We will discuss the specific situations for when *ghusl* becomes obligatory in other lessons. There are other instances when *ghusl* is recommended *(mustaḥab),* the most common of which are:

- **Ghusl al-Jumuʿah:** It is recommended to perform *ghusl* on Friday morning before the time of *Ẓuhr*. This has the effect of washing away many of our sins.
- **Ghusl on special days:** There are many days or nights throughout the year on which performing *ghusl* is highly recommended, such as the nights of Qadr *(Laylatul Qadr),* night preceding the 15th of Shaʿbān, Eidul Aḍḥā and Eidul Fiṭr, and many other days which are mentioned in the books of Jurisprudence.

GHUSL: washing the entire body in a certain manner with the intention of becoming closer to Allah ﷻ

IRTIMĀSĪ: by submersion

TARTĪBĪ: sequentially

TAYAMMUM: WHEN SHOULD IT BE PERFORMED?

In certain situations, we may need to purify ourselves with clean earth or soil instead of performing *wuḍūʾ* or *ghusl*, and this is called ***tayammum***. This option can only be exercised in specific circumstances, such as: when we do not have access to any water, water is harmful for us to use, we do not have enough time to perform *wuḍūʾ* or *ghusl,* and a few other instances which can be found in the books of Jurisprudence.

RULES OF TAYAMMUM

Tayammum can be performed on one of the following things (in order of preference):

1. Earth
2. Sand
3. Pebbles or stone

The item on which *tayammum* is performed must be:

- Dry
- Pure and clean *(ṭāhir)*
- According to Āyatullāh Sīstānī, it is *iḥtiyāṭ wājib* (obligatory precaution) that it leaves some particles of soil or dust on our hands, and it is better that we do not shake these off. According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, this is *mustaḥab* (recommended), but not required.

Practical Demonstration of Tayammum

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oh0gxMmyPSk

HOW TO PERFORM TAYAMMUM

Niyyah: Make the intention to perform *tayammum* for the sake of attaining nearness to Allah ﷻ.

Remove any barriers: Like in *wuḍūʾ*, any barriers on the forehead and hands, such as rings or nail polish, must be removed.

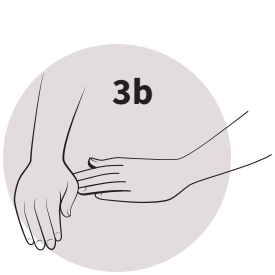
Step 1: Strike the palms of the hands simultaneously on the earth, sand, or stone (in order of preference) that is dry and pure.

Step 2: Pull both palms together from the top of the forehead where the hair grows down to the bridge of the nose. Both sides of the forehead joining the ears and over the eyebrows should be included. Try to cover the entire forehead.

Step 3: Wipe the palm of the left hand over the back of the right hand from the wrist bone to the fingertips, and then the palm of the right hand over the back of the left hand from the wrist bone to the fingertips.

Step 4: Repeat Step 1.

Step 5: Repeat Step 3.
Note: this step is a recommended precaution as per Āyatullāh Sīstānī; but an obligatory precaution as per Āyatullāh Khamenei.



Activity 2.2c: Make a Tayammum Kit

It is useful to have a *tayammum* kit ready for those emergency situations where we are not able to do *wuḍūʾ* or *ghusl* for whatever reason. You will need the following to make your *tayammum* bag:

- A small pouch that is easy to access.
- One of the things that *tayammum* can be done on (so earth, sand, or stone).

Try to keep this pouch handy in your room, or in your school bag in case you may need it in an emergency.

Activity 2.2d: Review Questions

1. Which of the following is the correct order of washing the body during *ghusl*?
   - **a.** Washing the head and neck, then the right side of the body, then the left side.
   - **b.** Washing the left side of the body, then the right, then the head and neck.
   - **c.** The order does not matter.

2. On which day of the week is it most recommended *(mustaḥab)* to perform a *ghusl*?
   - **a.** Friday
   - **b.** Thursday
   - **c.** Sunday

3. When touching the name 'Allah' in English, *wuḍūʾ* is necessary:
   - **a.** True
   - **b.** False

4. What can be used to perform *tayammum*?
   - **a.** Mud
   - **b.** Dry soil
   - **c.** Grass

5. When performing *tayammum*, one must wipe the face:
   - **a.** From the hairline to the bridge of the nose.
   - **b.** From the cheeks to the chin.
   - **c.** The entire face must be wiped.

6. For *ghusl tartībī*:
   - **a.** I can only wash from top to bottom.
   - **b.** I can interrupt my ghusl, then continue where I left off.
   - **c.** I can keep nail polish on my toes.

7. The water used for *wuḍūʾ* must be:
   - **a.** Pure and unmixed *(muṭlaq).*
   - **b.** Pure and clean *(ṭāhir).*
   - **c.** Both a & b are correct.

FLASHBACK! METHOD OF PERFORMING WUḌŪʾ

1. **Make the intention:** Before performing *wuḍūʾ*, one must make the intention that they are performing *wuḍūʾ* to become closer to Allah ﷻ and out of obedience to Him. A person is not required to say anything out loud. It is enough just to know that you are performing ***wuḍūʾ*** and why you are doing it.
2. **Mustaḥab actions:** The following initial three actions are recommended to perform:
   - Washing both of the hands
   - Rinsing the mouth three times
   - *Istinshāq* (putting water into the nostrils) three times
3. **Wājib actions:** The following six steps are obligatory to perform:
   - Washing the face from the top to the bottom
   - Washing the right arm from the elbow to the fingertips
   - Washing the left arm from the elbow to the fingertips
   - Wiping the top of the head
   - Wiping the right foot from the toes to the ankle
   - Wiping the left foot from the toes to the ankle

In these steps, there is a difference between the parts that are **washed** and the parts that are **wiped**. The parts that are washed—your face and arms—can be wet before you do *wuḍūʾ*; however, the parts that are to be wiped—your head and feet—must be dry before you begin, and you cannot take new water from the sink or anywhere else to wipe them. In certain cases, if your hands dry up before you are able to wipe your head, then you can take some water from your eyebrows or beard (for men who have one) in order to wipe the head and feet. In every step, make sure to use your hands to wipe each part of the body, meaning that your hands are moving, not the body parts.

Tip: It is good to close the tap (from where the water is coming out) after you use the water for each part so that you do not waste any water. The Prophet ﷺ used to use very little water (only about a *mod* which is equal to approximately 800ml), for his *wuḍūʾ*.[3] After you finish washing the left arm, be careful that you do not get any new water from the tap on the part of your hands that will do the wiping, because *masḥ* (wiping) of your head and feet cannot be done with new water.

The Story of Āyatullāh Marʿashī Najafī

Āyatullāh Marʿashī used to go to the Shrine of Sayyidah Maʿṣūmah of Qum every day, around one hour before the *adhān* of *Fajr*. He would sit there and answer questions, pray *Ṣalātul Layl*, etc. As the time of *adhān* would approach, one of his helpers would bring him a cup of water, which was usually not even full. Using this water, he would perform *wuḍūʾ* right there, and oftentimes, there was some water left over after he finished his *wuḍūʾ*.

3 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Man lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, Vol.1, P. 34.

WASHING THE

FACE

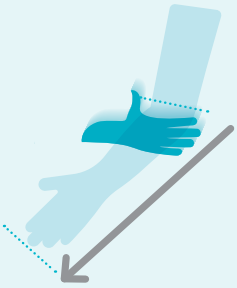
Before you wash: face does *not* have to be dry
Fill your hand with water.[4]
Pour water on your face from where the hair grows on the top of the forehead to the bottom of the chin, covering the width of your middle finger to your thumb.
Direction of washing must be from the top to the bottom, and not in reverse.

MUSTAḤABBĀT: Washing once is *wājib*, and washing twice is *mustaḥab* (recommended). Washing more than two times makes your *wuḍūʾ* invalid *(bāṭil)*.

EXTRA TIP!
Wash a little bit of the inside corner of the eyes, the inside of your nose, and inside the edges of your lips to make sure the water has reached.

WASHING THE RIGHT AND LEFT

ARMS



Before you wash: arms do *not* have to be dry
Fill your hand with water[1]
Pour it on your right arm to wash from above the elbows to the tips of the fingers
Do not forget to wash in between the fingers as well
Repeat the same thing for the left arm
You must keep your arm still, and move your hand across it

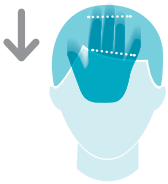
MUSTAḤABBĀT: Washing once is *wājib*, and washing twice is *mustaḥab* (recommended). Washing more than two times makes your *wuḍūʾ* invalid *(bāṭil)*.
It is *mustaḥab* for girls to start washing from the inner side of the arm and for boys to start washing from the outer side of the arm (from the elbow).

EXTRA TIP!
How to calculate the number of washes:

You can use multiple handfuls of water to accomplish a complete wash of the arms, but once all of the parts of the arms have been completely washed, any other water that you pour onto it will count as the next wash (wash number 2).[5]

WIPING THE TOP OF THE

HEAD



Before you wipe: the part that will be wiped must be dry
Do not take any new water. Use the same water that is on your hands from washing your left arm.
Wipe the top section of your head[6] with your right hand from the back to front without going past the hairline.
You must keep your head still, while your hand moves across it

MUSTAḤABBĀT: Wiping just a little is enough even with one finger, but it is recommended to wipe with fingers flat the length of one finger, and the width of three joined fingers.

EXTRA TIP!
When wiping the head, stop before you reach your face, so that the water on the face does not mix with the water on your hand. But if you do end up touching your face, make sure to use other parts of your hand for wiping your feet.

WIPING THE RIGHT AND LEFT

FEET

Before you wipe: the part that will be wiped must be dry
Do not take any new water. Use the same water that is on your hands from washing your left arm.
Wipe your right foot with your right hand from the tip of the toes to the ankle.
Wipe your left foot with your left hand in the same manner.
You must keep your feet still, while your hand moves across it

MUSTAḤABBĀT: Wiping of the feet can have any width, (half a finger, one finger, three fingers, or the whole hand), as long as the length that needs to be wiped is wiped; but it is better that the width of the wiping should be three joined fingers, and it is still better that the wiping of the entire foot is done with the entire hand.

EXTRA TIP!
Sometimes, when we are performing *wuḍūʾ*, some water may fall on to our feet. If this happens, we *must* dry our feet before wiping them.

4 You must fill your hand with water, then pour it to wash these areas, not just use a damp hand.
5 The same counting method applies for the face.
6 The parting or roots of the hair should be wiped, or if there is short hair on the top of the head.

CHAPTER 3

Ṣalāh

3.1 Preliminaries to Prayer

3.2 Further Rules of Ṣalāh

3.3 Ṣalāh: Internal Humility (Khushūʿ)

3.1 Preliminaries to Prayer

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify the five preliminary conditions necessary for *ṣalāh*: purity (*ṭahārah),* direction *(qiblah)*, timing, place, and clothing.
- Contrast what a person can and cannot perform *sujūd* on.
- Demonstrate how to accurately use a prayer calendar.
- Analyze the importance of seeking permission for where a person can recite one's prayer.

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:
"Prayer is to religion as the head is to the body."[1]

Ṣalāh is one of the most important obligations that Allah ﷻ has ordained upon people. It is a source of spiritual nourishment, and means of gaining closeness to Him. However, before offering this very important act of worship, there are some preliminary conditions that must be met:

- **Ṭahārah:** We must be ritually clean and pure *(ṭāhir),* and in the state of *wuḍūʾ,* in order to pray. We have discussed these in detail in previous lessons.
- **Qiblah:** We must face the direction toward the Kaʿbah in Mecca, Arabia.
- **Timing:** Prayers must be offered at the correct times.
- **Place:** Prayer must be offered in an appropriate and permissible place.
- **Clothing:** The clothing worn while offering prayer must meet certain conditions.

Let us discuss some of the above conditions in more detail.

FACING THE QIBLAH

One of the preliminary conditions for *ṣalāh* being valid is the direction in which it is offered. All Muslims must face a certain direction while praying, which is known as the **qiblah**. Physically, the *qiblah* is the Holy Kaʿbah in Mecca; and wherever Muslims are, they must find the direction of the Kaʿbah and face it while praying. Today, we have some very easy methods for finding the direction of the *qiblah*, such as:

- Downloading an application on our smartphones that will find the *qiblah* based on our location.
- Using a special *qiblah* compass, or any other means that gives us conviction that we are praying in the right direction.

If we are unable to use any of these tools to determine the direction of the *qiblah*, this does not mean that we should delay offering our prayers. Instead, we should pray in the direction that the *qiblah* most likely lies in. If we have absolutely no idea, then we must proceed in accordance with the ruling of our *marjaʿ*:

- Āyatullāh Sīstānī: Pray in any one direction. It is a recommended precaution to pray in all four directions.
- Āyatullāh Khamenei: Pray in all four directions out of obligatory precaution, if time allows; but if time is limited, then a person can pray in any one direction.

1 Muttaqī Hindī, ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, Vol. 7, P. 279, Ḥadīth #1887.

TIME OF PRAYER

The times at which one must offer *ṣalāh* have been established by Allah ﷻ. Think of prayer as a checkpoint. As we go about our daily lives, we become very occupied, and at times, we may become oblivious of Allah, the Exalted. As a result, we may also become unaware of whether or not He is pleased with our actions. Since the prayers become *wājib* at certain times throughout the day, it reminds us about our purpose in life, gives us a chance to recalibrate, and helps us reflect on our actions. If we were to pray only whenever we felt like it, then there would no longer be any mandatory checkpoint to help us reflect on our actions and fix them.

It is important for us to be cognizant about the timings of the prayers, and do our best to pray exactly on time when the time first sets in (prime time). Once, Imāmʿ Alī ﷺ, while in the middle of a battle, paused amongst all of the fighting and looked up to the sky. Many of the companions were puzzled by this and asked what he was doing. The Imām ﷺ informed them that he was checking whether the time of the prayer had set in.[2]

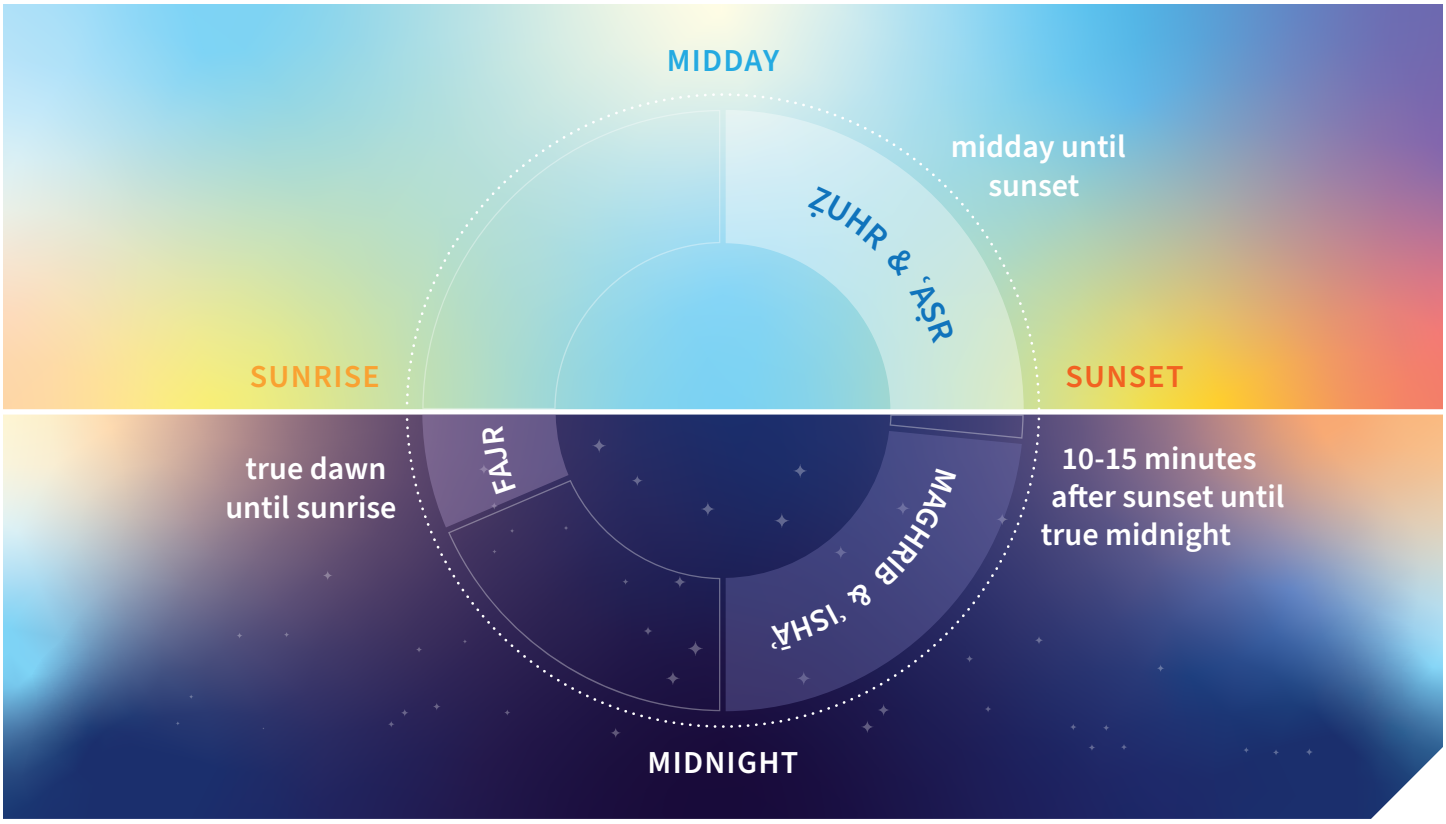
The companions of Imām Husayn ﷺ did the same thing in the midst of the battle of Karbalāʾ. In fact, some companions of Imām Husayn ﷺ were martyred on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ while protecting those who were offering their prayers at prime time.[3]

Through these instances, we learn the importance of praying on time, and not neglecting our prayers even in the most difficult circumstances.

Now that we know it is extremely important for us to offer our prayers on time, we must know the times for each prayer:

- *Fajr* prayer: from the start of true dawn until sunrise.
- *Ẓuhr* and *ʿAṣr* prayers: from midday—when the sun is directly overhead in the sky and then starts to decline (halfway between sunrise and sunset)—until sunset.
- *Maghrib* and *ʿIshāʾ* prayers: from about 10-15 minutes after sunset (when the redness in the eastern part of the sky is gone) until true midnight (halfway between sunset and dawn).

We can refer to a local prayer calendar or *ṣalāh* timing app prepared by reliable sources and endorsed by people of knowledge to find out the exact timings for each prayer. Remember that in larger cities, times can vary by a few minutes here or there when you go from one end to the other. We should make sure we are aware of all of the correct timings to ensure that we offer each prayer within its allocated time.



2 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 83, P. 23.
3 Shaykh Mufīd, *Al-Irshād*, Vol. 2, P. 105.

Activity 3.1a: What Time Is It?

Below is an example of a prayer calendar for a particular city. Take a look at the calendar and then answer the following questions:

1. On August 30th, what time is *Maghrib ṣalāh*? _____

2. On August 23rd, what time will *Fajr ṣalāh* be *qaḍāʾ* at? _____

3. On August 25th, what time will *Ẓuhr ṣalāh* set in? _____

4. Approximately how many minutes after sunset does the time of *Maghrib* begin? _____

5. **BONUS QUESTION:** On August 28th, what is the latest time that *ʿIshāʾ ṣalāh* should be offered?

_____

Ramaḍān	August	Fajr (FASTING BEGINS)	Sunrise	Ẓuhr (NOON PRAYERS)	Sunset	Maghrib (FASTING ENDS)
1	22	5:02	6:26	11:58	17:31	17:51
2	23	5:01	6:25	11:58	17:32	17:52
3	24	5:00	6:23	11:58	17:32	17:53
4	25	4:59	6:22	11:57	17:33	17:53
5	26	4:58	6:21	11:57	17:34	17:54
6	27	4:56	6:20	11:57	17:34	17:55
7	28	4:55	6:18	11:56	17:35	17:55
8	29	4:54	6:17	11:56	17:36	17:56
9	30	4:53	6:16	11:56	17:36	17:57

Qaḍāʾ Prayers

Missing any one of the daily prayers **deliberately** is forbidden and a major sin. We must do our best to ensure that we pray all of our *ṣalāh* on time. If a person misses a prayer—regardless of the reason—they need to ask forgiveness from Allah ﷻ, and make up that prayer at a later time. This is called offering a *qaḍāʾ* prayer. For example, if it is night time, and for some reason a person missed their *ʿAṣr* prayer, they need to pray it as soon as possible to make up for that prayer they missed during its specified time. If for some reason, one does not get a chance to make up their *qaḍāʾ* prayer that same day, then one should have a special place where they can keep track of any *qaḍāʾ* prayers, and continuously work to make up those missed prayers as soon as possible.

QURʾĀNIC CONNECTION

Tawbah تَوْبَة : repenting (which we do), relenting (which Allah does)

- Arabic Root Word: ت و ب t-w-b
- Root Meaning: to turn back
- Occurrences in the Noble Qurʾān: 87 times
- Related Words: التَّوَّاب (at-Tawwāb): the Oft-Returning, the Acceptor of Repentance
- Reference: Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Nisāʾ (4), Verse 17.

THE PLACE OF PRAYER AND PROSTRATION

Allah ﷻ has made the whole earth a place for worship. We can pray in most places, and the place that we are in should not cause us to delay or miss our prayers. However, the environment in which we pray is important, and will affect the spirituality that we feel during our prayers. This is why there are certain rules that need to be followed when it comes to the place where we are reciting our prayers:

1. We must own, or have permission to use the place, where we are praying. If a person prays somewhere where they are not allowed to, then their prayer is not valid.
2. The place of prayer should not be ritually impure *(najis)* and wet. If it is both *najis* and wet, then this would make one's clothes and body *najis*, thereby making one's prayer void. However, if a certain place is *najis* but dry, then one can still pray there. Regardless, the place where one's forehead is placed in prostration *(sujūd)* must be *ṭāhir*, even if it is dry.
3. If a man and a woman are praying in the same area, then:
   - **a)** According to Āyatullāh Sīstānī, the woman should pray behind the man. However, if there is a barrier between them, then it is okay for them to pray side by side, or for the woman to be in front. If there is no barrier and they are more than 4.5 meters (5 yards) apart, then man does not have to be in front.
   - **b)** According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, the two should be more than a handspan apart, and the man does not have to be in front.

Both of these rulings are according to obligatory precaution *(iḥtiyāṭ wājib)*.

4. The place of prayer must be steady. For example, one cannot pray on a rocking boat. However, it is permissible to pray on a plane if the necessary rules are observed.
5. The place where one performs *sujūd* should be roughly leveled with where they are standing. Therefore, we cannot pray on very steep hills or steps.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

What could be some reasons for Allah's ﷻ wisdom behind a person having permission to use a particular place for one's *ṣalāh*? Why can we not assume that because the earth belongs to Allah ﷻ we can pray anywhere?

The Place of Prostration (Sujūd)

The object on which we perform *sajdah* must meet certain conditions. The most important conditions to remember are:

1. It cannot be made of something that can be eaten or worn.
2. It must come from the earth (e.g., soil, dirt, leaves, paper grown from trees, etc.).

Some common objects on which we can prostrate (do *sajdah*) are:

1. Solid clay, which is normally called a *turbah*. The preferred clay is from the grave of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ.[4]
2. A piece of wood that has not been coated with a substance that will be a barrier.
3. Grass, or non-edible leaves.
4. Paper, or tissue paper can also be used, if none of the above are available.

Rewards of Praying in a Masjid

Both attending and praying in the masjid are extremely rewarding acts. The masjid is the "house of Allah," and attending the masjid shows that we are respecting His house and showing our submission. The following narrations show just how much reward there is in these actions:

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:
"Whoever walks to a masjid with the intention of praying in congregation will get the equivalent of 70,000 good deeds for every step that one takes, and they will be raised on many levels…"[5]

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said: "O Abū Dharr, as long as you are sitting in a masjid, for every breath you take, Allah will grant you an extra level in Paradise, the angels will ask for blessings for you, ten good deeds will be recorded for you, and ten bad deeds will be erased."[6]

4 Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, *Wasā'il ash-Shī'ah*, Vol. 5, P. 366.
5 Rayshahrī, Muḥammad, *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah,* Ḥadīth #8302.
6 *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah,* Ḥadīth #8303.

THE CLOTHING FOR PRAYER

When we are going to pray, we should make sure that we dress appropriately. The clothes we wear during prayer must:

Be ritually pure and clean (ṭāhir)

One's clothing should not be made from the parts of a predatory animal, or an animal that has not been slaughtered in accordance to Islamic law.

Be mubāḥ

This means that we must own them, or have permission to wear them.

Sufficiently cover the body

For women, this means covering the entire body except the face and hands. The feet need to be covered as well if a *non-maḥram* is present (due to the rules of *ḥijāb*). [In order to be certain that a woman has covered the obligatory areas, she must also cover a little bit extra on the sides of her face, and the area below her wrists, and some parts below her ankles—ensuring that when she bends down or goes into prostration, the obligatory parts remain covered.]

For men, this means covering the private parts; but it is better to cover as much of the body as possible.

Not be made of gold or pure silk

if you are a man (this is true at all times, not just during prayer; but if worn during the prayers, then the prayers will be void).

Activity 3.1b: Act One!

In groups of three, create a short skit on your assigned scenario. Be sure to include the problem, the solution and a little bit of humor! Present your skit to the class and vote on the best one! You can even look up more specific rulings from your *marjaʿs* website for extra points.

SCENARIO 1	Muhammad and his family visit a restaurant for dinner. Just as the time for *ṣalāh* approaches, Muhammad takes a stroll down the hallway and finds a storage closet. He thinks to himself, *This place is quiet and suitable for ṣalāh*. Can Muhammad pray in the closet, or does he need to ask permission from the restaurant staff?
SCENARIO 2	Just as Muhammad is about to offer his prayers, he notices that there are some drops of blood on his prayer mat. He must have cut his foot and not noticed. Can he still pray on the prayer mat, or does he need to clean the blood first?
SCENARIO 3	Muhammad also notices a large amount of dried blood on his foot and pants. What should he do before starting his *ṣalāh*?
SCENARIO 4	Ahmad and his friends go camping in the mountains and set up their tents just before nightfall. It is now time for *Maghrib* prayers, and everyone prepares themselves for prayers. The campsite is not flat, but rather very uneven and steep. Ahmad tries to recall what he learned in class regarding steep slopes and prayer, but he cannot remember. Can you help him?
SCENARIO 5	Ali is part of his school soccer team and is playing an indoor game on synthetic turf. Ali usually carries his *turbah* with him, but he forgot to bring it with him this time. It is time for *ṣalāh*, and he is looking for something to pray on. Ali has the following options and needs your help choosing what to pray on: **A.** Pray on the turf, as it's just like grass **B.** Pray on the wooden basketball court, which is "treated" wood **C.** Grab a leaf from a tree nearby and prostrate on the leaf
SCENARIO 6	Zahra is staying over at her cousin Zainab's house. It is time for *ṣalāh*. She opens her cousin's wardrobe to borrow a prayer dress covering for *ṣalāh*. What should she do before wearing the scarf?

Activity 3.1b: Act One! (Worksheet)

Once you are assigned your skit, read through the scenario, and fill out this worksheet before meeting with your group.

SCENARIO #: _____

1. What is the question/problem?

2. What is the answer/solution? Make sure to include how you came to this answer.

3. Brainstorm some ideas for presenting this problem and solution to your class.

4. Where can you go to find the specific answer from your *marjaʿ*?

Activity 3.1b: Act One! (Worksheet During the Skits)

After each group presents their skit, take two minutes to fill out the problem and solution that was presented. If you still have questions about the problem or solution, then write it down at the end of the worksheet for your teacher.

SCENARIO # 1

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 2

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 3

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 4

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 5

Problem	Solution

SCENARIO # 6

Problem	Solution

Questions I still have:

3.2 Further Rules of Ṣalāh

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Distinguish between the *rukn* (foundational), *ghayr (non) rukn* (obligatory, but non-foundational), and *mustaḥab* (recommended) acts of *ṣalāh.*
- Understand the sanctity of performing *ṣalāh* correctly.
- Distinguish between intentional and unintentional additions, and how to rectify each of them.
- Establish the importance of, and the rules of using a *turbah* correctly.

RUKN: foundational

GHAYR RUKN: obligatory but non-foundational

In previous years, we learned how to perform the obligatory daily prayers. Today, we will learn about the ***rukn*** (foundational) and ***ghayr (non) rukn*** (obligatory, but non-foundational) acts of *ṣalāh*.

OBLIGATORY ACTS OF ṢALĀH

As we previously learned, there are 11 obligatory acts and conditions in prayers. These 11 obligatory acts and conditions are divided into two categories:

11 Obligatory Acts and Conditions of Ṣalah

5 RUKN	6 GHAYR (NON) RUKN
Intention	Qirāʾah
Takbīratul-Iḥrām	Tashahhud
Qiyām	Dhikr
Rukūʿ	Taslīm
2 Sajdahs or Sajdatayn	Tartīb
	Muwālāt

ADDING ACTIONS

Any addition that is made to the foundational *(rukn)* acts—whether intentionally or unintentionally—will make the prayers **void**. Some examples include:

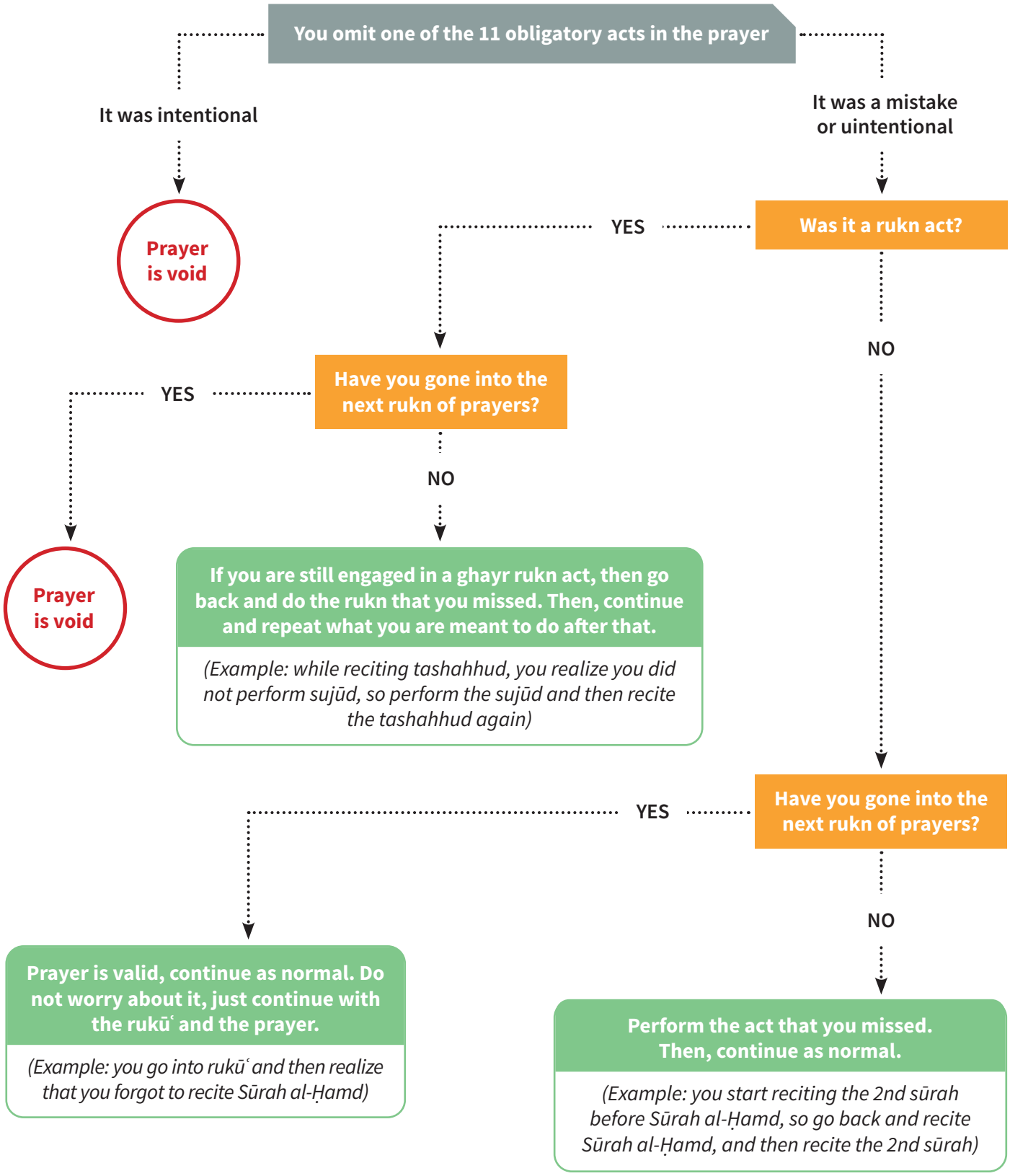
- Reciting *takbīratul-iḥrām* twice with the intention of both being obligatory
- Performing four *rakaʿāt* for a three *rakaʿāt* prayer
- Performing four *sujūd* in one *rakʿah*
- Performing two *rukūʿ* in one *rakʿah*

If a *ghayr rukn* action is added intentionally, then the prayer will become void. However, if it is added unintentionally, then the prayer can be rectified by performing *sajdah as-sahw* (which will be discussed in the next lesson).

STOP AND REFLECT: Why do you think making additions to ṣalāh invalidates it? Can you think of something else in your life that cannot be changed at all, and the impact that even a slightest change would have on it?

OMITTING OBLIGATORY ACTIONS

What happens if you omit one of the obligatory actions of *ṣalāh*? Look at the flowchart below to see the rules for missing one of these acts.


You omit one of the 11 obligatory acts in the prayer
It was intentional
It was a mistake or uintentional
Prayer is void
Was it a rukn act?
YES
NO
Have you gone into the next rukn of prayers?
YES
NO
Prayer is void
If you are still engaged in a ghayr rukn act, then go back and do the rukn that you missed. Then, continue and repeat what you are meant to do after that.
(Example: while reciting tashahhud, you realize you did not perform sujūd, so perform the sujūd and then recite the tashahhud again)
Have you gone into the next rukn of prayers?
YES
NO
Prayer is valid, continue as normal. Do not worry about it, just continue with the rukūʿ and the prayer.
(Example: you go into rukūʿ and then realize that you forgot to recite Sūrah al-Ḥamd)
Perform the act that you missed. Then, continue as normal.
(Example: you start reciting the 2nd sūrah before Sūrah al-Ḥamd, so go back and recite Sūrah al-Ḥamd, and then recite the 2nd sūrah)

Activity 3.2a: Void or Valid?

Determine if the following actions in ṣalāh have made one's prayer void, or if it is still valid. Circle your answer.

1. You are reciting *ʿIshāʾ ṣalāh,* but only performed three *rakaʿāt*.	**VOID**	**VALID**
2. In the middle of *tashahhud*, you realize that you did not complete both of the *sajdahs*, so you go back to complete the missed one.	**VOID**	**VALID**
3. To try and improve the quality of your prayer, you intentionally repeat the *rukūʿ*.	**VOID**	**VALID**
4. You unintentionally forgot to do *tashahhud* in your second *rakʿah,* and realized after you started your third *rakʿah*.	**VOID**	**VALID**
5. You realize that you forgot to do *rukūʿ* but are now already in *sujūd*.	**VOID**	**VALID**
6. You accidentally recited the *dhikr* for *sujūd* in *rukūʿ* and realize before you stand up, so you recite the correct *dhikr* before standing up from *rukūʿ*.	**VOID**	**VALID**

7. Are there any scenarios you have that still confuse you about whether they make your *ṣalāh* void?

8. Once you have completed the above table independently, now discuss your answers with a partner. Together, come up with two new scenarios—one that makes your *ṣalāh* void, and one that maintains its validity.

	VOID	**VALID**
	VOID	**VALID**

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT ṢALĀH

Below are some common questions or issues that may come up which are related to *ṣalāh*.

Using Turbahs with Engravings

These can be used, but it is better to place the forehead on the flat (non-engraved) part of the *turbah* because it is better to avoid *sajdah* on writing, and it can also be a bit of a distraction.

Respecting theTurbah

It is important to show respect to the *turbah* because of the sanctity that it has due to its relation to Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ or the other Imāms ﷺ. Therefore, actions like throwing a *turbah*, tossing it from one hand to another, deliberately putting it in a dirty place, or purposely stepping on it should be avoided.

Placing a Turbah with the Name of Allah ﷻ or the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ Face Down

We need to avoid disrespecting any of these holy names. If placing them face down on the ground is considered disrespectful, then we should not do this. This may depend on what type of surface the *turbah* is being placed on.

Using Turbahs that Count the Number of Sujūd

Some people use a *turbah* that is embedded with a counter in it which tracks the number of *sujūd* performed. People use this to reduce their doubts about the number of *rakaʿāt* they have prayed. This is okay to use, as long as the *turbah* is designed in a way that once the forehead presses down on it, it is firm and not a moving surface.

Closing One's Eyes during Ṣalāh

It is discouraged *(makrūh)*, but not forbidden *(ḥarām)*, to close one's eyes during *ṣalāh*. Therefore, it is better to avoid it, but it can be done as a temporary means of training oneself to concentrate better during *ṣalāh*.

STOP AND REFLECT: When you picture a *turbah* in your mind, or hold one in your hand, what comes to mind immediately? What do you picture?

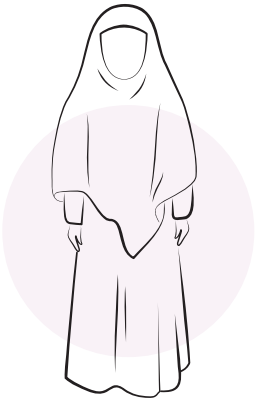
STOP AND REFLECT: A *turbah* is as significant to *ṣalāh*, as _____ is significant to _____.

RECOMMENDED THINGS (MUSTAḤABBĀT) IN ṢALĀH

Hand Motions during Takbīratul Iḥrām and Qiyām

In the standing position of *qiyām*, it is *mustaḥab* to stand with one's hands on the thighs, fingers together, and looking at the place of *sujūd*. For men, they should stand with their feet apart—a distance between three spread-apart fingers to one hand span; but as for women, they should stand with their feet together. There are four types of *qiyām* in *ṣalah,* which are as follows:[1]

1. *Qiyām* during *Takbīratul Iḥrām*.
2. *Qiyām* during the recitation of Sūrah al-Ḥamd and the second Sūrah, or *at-Tasbīḥāt al-Arbaʿah*.
3. *Qiyām* before going to *rukūʿ (muttaṣil bir rukūʿ).*
4. *Qiyām* after getting up from *rukūʿ*.



Qiyām during *Takbīratul Iḥrām* and before going into *rukūʿ* are *rukn*, therefore if one does not perform them properly, one's *ṣalāh* will become void.

It is *mustaḥab* to raise the hands parallel to the face (or even further back and parallel to the ears) when reciting any *takbīr* throughout the prayer, especially when reciting *Takbīratul Iḥrām*. It is better to pause after saying *Takbīratul Iḥrām* (enough to refresh the breath) before proceeding to the recitation *(qirāʾah)*.

Qirāʾah

It is *mustaḥab* to recite the following in a low voice: *"Aʿūdhu billāhi minash-shayṭānir-rajīm"*—which means "I seek protection in Allah from Shayṭān, the evil one"—before beginning the recitation of the two sūrahs. It is also recommended to pause between each verse of the sūrah. After completing Sūrah al-Ḥamd, it is recommended to say: *"Alḥamdulillāhi Rabbil-ʿālamīn"*—which means "All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds"—however not loudly, rather in an audible whisper.[2] Intentionally saying *"Āmīn"* at the end of Sūrah al-Ḥamd makes the prayer void!

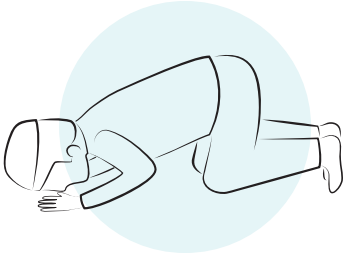
Rukūʿ

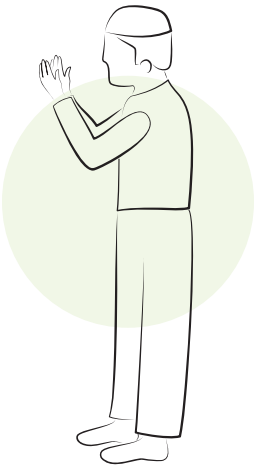
It is *mustaḥab* for a man to bend to an extent that he is able to keep the palms of his hands (with the fingers open) on his knees. Other *mustaḥab* guidelines for men in regards to their *rukūʿ* include: his legs should be straight (not bent), his back should be flat, and he should stretch forth his neck and keep it in line with his back. In this position, he should look between his two feet while he is reciting the *dhikr*. For women, it is *mustaḥab* to slightly bend the knees, and place the hands on the thighs (with fingers together) a little above the knees. After finishing the *rukūʿ*, one should stand up straight; and it is *mustaḥab* to say: *"Samiʿ Allāhu liman ḥamidah"*—which means "Allah listens to those who praise Him"—while standing still before beginning the descent into *sujūd*.

1 Ṭabāṭabāʾī Yazdī, Muḥammad Kāẓim, *Al-ʿUrwah al-Wuthqā*, Vol. 3, Pp. 87-88.
2 Āyatullāh Sīstānī, *Book of Islamic Laws*, Ruling #1003.

Sujūd

When going into *sujūd*, it is *mustaḥab* for a man to place his hands on the ground before his knees. For women, it is *mustaḥab* to put her knees on the ground before her hands. In *sujūd*, there are seven parts that must be on the ground before we begin the *dhikr*: the forehead, the two palms (not the tips or parts of the fingers, but the actual palms of the hands), the two knees, and both of the big toes. It is *mustaḥab* for men to place only the hands on the ground (next to their head) and have the elbows up in the air (i.e., not leaning on anything) during the *sujūd*. However, for women, it is *mustaḥab* to put their entire forearms (up to the elbows) on the ground. In *sujūd*, it is also *mustaḥab* for everyone to look at their nose. When sitting between the two *sajdahs*, it is *mustaḥab* to say *"Astaghfirullāha Rabbī wa atūbu ilayh"*—which means "I seek repentance from Allah, my Lord, and I turn back to Him"—and for a person to look at one's lap. Then as one is standing up, it is recommended to say: *"Biḥawlillāhi wa quwwatihi aqūmu wa aqʿud"*—which means "With the strength and power of Allah, I stand and I sit."





Qunūt

It is *mustaḥab* to place one's hands in front of the face, opening upwards toward the sky. It is also *mustaḥab* to look at the palms while reciting the *qunūt*. The *duʿāʾ* of *qunūt* can be anything that addresses Allah ﷻ in any language, but according to some *marājiʿ* at least a portion of it should be in Arabic in order to fulfill the conditions of it being *qunūt*. It is essential to study the rulings of your own *marjaʿ*.

Tashahhud and Taslīm

Before saying the *tashahhud*, it is *mustaḥab* to say *"Alḥamdulillāh"*—which means "All praise belongs to Allah." It is also recommended to look at one's lap during *tashahhud*. After that, for the *taslīm*, it is *mustaḥab* to say *"As-salāmu ʿalayka ayyuhan-Nabiyyu wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh."* Then, saying both *"As-salāmu ʿalaynā wa ʿalā ʿibādil-lāhiṣ-ṣāliḥīn"* and "*As-salāmu ʿalaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh*" is also *mustaḥab*, but one should at least say the latter of the two—meaning *"As-salāmu ʿalaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh"* in order to complete the prayer. After the *salām*, it is recommended to recite *takbīr (Allāhu Akbar)*—three times while bringing the hands up to the face.

It is highly recommended to recite the *tasbīḥ* of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ after *ṣalāh*, as well as Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ, and Āyatul Kursī. Our great scholars encourage reciting the *ziyārah* of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ regularly, and one of the best times to do this is after completing the prayers.

STOP AND REFLECT: Write a *duʿāʾ* you commonly make, or one you would like to start making after completing your prayers. This can be in English or whichever language you are comfortable with.

In *ṣalah*, there are two recitations *(dhikr)* that can be said while a person is moving. These are: "*Allāhu Akbar,*" and *"Biḥawlillāh wa quwwatihi aqūmu wa aqʿud."* Apart from these, you can say any *dhikr* in *ṣalah*, even while in movement, if you have the intention of it as being general *dhikr,* not a part of your actual *ṣalah*.

Activity 3.2b: Create a Poster

Learning and putting into practice all of the *mustaḥab* rulings of *ṣalāh* can sometimes be confusing. Create a poster that will help you remember the *mustaḥabbāt* to put in a place where it will be a daily reminder for you. You can create the poster digitally or by hand, whichever you are more comfortable with. Use the rubric below as a guide to ensure that all of the components have been completed.

Within your poster be sure to include:

- Graphics/Drawings to help you understand the actions better.
- Differentiate between *mustaḥab* acts for men and women where applicable.
- Add any other details that can help make your *ṣalāh* better.

GRADING RUBRIC

	1 Ineffective	2 Somewhat Effective	3 Considerably Effective	4 Highly Effective
Graphics	Graphics do not make the topic easier to understand and/or have no sources.	Most graphics relate to the topic, and most of them have a source cited.	Most graphics are related to the topic, and make it easier to understand. All graphics have a source cited.	All graphics are directly related to the topic, and all borrowed graphics have a source cited.
Grammar	There are 5 or more grammatical mistakes.	There are 3-5 grammatical mistakes.	There are 1-2 grammatical mistakes.	There are no grammatical mistakes at all.
Islamic Principles / Accuracy	Content does not meet Islamic Principles.	Content meets Islamic Principles, however, there is a lack of accuracy in item description.	Content presented meets almost all of the Islamic Principles mentioned above, while maintaining accuracy of item description.	Content presented suits all of the Islamic Principles mentioned above, while maintaining accuracy of item description.
Creativity	Project was distractingly messy and/or lacked design.	Project was presented somewhat creatively, but left the audience wanting more in design and neatness.	Project was presented in an engaging manner, but lacked neatness.	Project was presented in an engaging and catchy way in terms of design, neatness, and layout.
Quality	Materials presented are not convincing or compelling.	Materials presented do not serve the intended purpose and lack quality.	Materials presented do not serve the intended purpose, but still demonstrate quality work.	Materials presented are extremely compelling and convincing.

Activity 3.2c: Review Worksheet

TRUE OR FALSE:
State whether the below statements are true or false, and provide a clarification or correction statement where necessary.

EXAMPLE: Reciting *qunūt* in the second *rakʿah* with the *duʿāʾ* completely in Arabic is *wājib*.
False. *Qunūt* is a *mustaḥab* act that can be omitted. When it is recited, *duʿā* can be made in any language but a portion should be in Arabic.

1. Omitting a *rukn* act of *ṣalāh* does not make the *ṣalāh* void if it was done unintentionally.

2. Closing one's eyes during *ṣalāh* is highly recommended for concentration.

3. It is *mustaḥab* to recite *"Aʿūdhu billāhi minash-shayṭānir-rajīm"* before beginning the recitation of the sūrahs.

4. If a *ghayr* (non) *rukn* act of *ṣalāh* is added intentionally or unintentionally, it makes the *ṣalāh* void.

5. Placing a *turbah* with engravings face up for *sujūd* makes our *ṣalāh* void.

MATCHING: Match the correct *mustaḥab* actions on the left with the *rukn* or the *ghayr rukn* on the right.

6. Reciting "*Aʿūdhu billāhi minash-shayṭānir-rajīm*" before reciting sūrahs in this *ghayr rukn*.
7. It is recommended to say "*Astaghfirullāha Rabbī wa atūbu ilayh*" when sitting after the first part of this *rukn*.
8. It is mustaḥab to say "*Alḥamdulillāh*" and to look at one's lap during this *ghayr rukn*.
9. It is *mustaḥab* to raise the hands parallel to the face or ears when reciting *takbīr* throughout the prayer, and especially when performing this *rukn*.
10. After standing up from this *rukn*, it is *mustaḥab* to say "*Samiʿ Allāhu li-man ḥamidah.*"

- **a.** Two *Sujūd*
- **b.** *Qirāʾah*
- **c.** *Rukūʿ*
- **d.** *Tashahhud*
- **e.** *Takbīratul Iḥrām*

11. Now that you have learned the *mustaḥab* aspects of *ṣalāh*, analyze one of the prayers offered by your local Imām, a teacher, parent, or someone else whom you admire. For each action of the prayer, list out all of the *mustaḥab* things they do. Why do you think they do them?

3.3 Ṣalāh: Internal Humility (Khushūʿ)

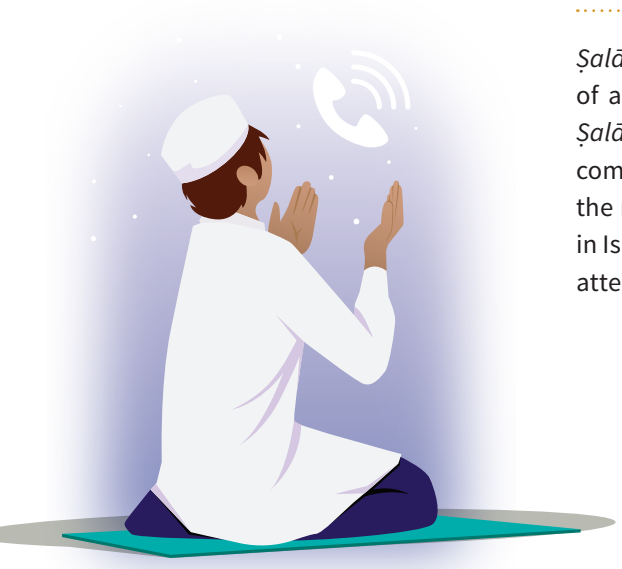
OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Recognize the significance of who we are speaking to in *ṣalāh.*
- Identify our internal state *(khushūʿ)* and external state (*khuḍūʿ*) during *ṣalāh.*
- Examine some of the objectives of *ṣalāh.*
- Establish an action plan to increase our internal state *(khushūʿ)* and external state *(khuḍūʿ)*ʿ in *ṣalāh.*

KHUSHŪʿ:
internal humility

KHUḌŪʿ:
external humility



ṢALĀH: A MEETING WITH THE KING OF ALL KINGS!

Imagine that you are given a once in a lifetime opportunity to have a private meeting with a very powerful, kind, and generous king. The king sends you a special invitation card that addresses you by your name, and lists the details of the meeting—the exact time and address of the palace. The king also tells you to bring along a written list of all of your requests so that he can grant them for you; as well as a list of your concerns so that he can ease those concerns.

Would this not be the best offer you have ever received in your life? Would you not feel excited and honored to meet this king and have a one-on-one audience with him? You would probably want to go shopping to buy some nice, new clothes; and do all that you can to make sure that you look clean and presentable. Of course, you would arrive at the palace on time, and be on your best behavior the entire time that you are in front of the king.

Well, Allah ﷻ has offered us something even greater and more special than a meeting with an ordinary human being who may be a king. Allah ﷻ—the King of all kings, the All-Kind, the All-Generous, and the All-Powerful Creator of the worlds—has given us a very special opportunity to meet with Him and talk to Him five times every single day in the five daily prayers! In these prayers, we are given the incredible chance to ask from Allah ﷻ whatever we want, and for help in solving all of our problems. Plus there is more! These meetings come with a guarantee that all of our wishes (which are good for us) will be granted, and all of our worries and fears will be removed from us (when the time is right)! Allah ﷻ makes this promise in the Qurʾān when He says:

> "Call upon Me, I will answer you."[1]

Ṣalāh is one of the most important obligations in Islam. It is one of the main ways of achieving our purpose of getting closer to Allah ﷻ and reaching our perfection. *Ṣalāh* is an action we perform every day for the sake of Allah ﷻ, and is a form of communication between us and our Creator. In this lesson, we will reflect on some of the reasons why we pray, and the wisdom behind the form of the prayers stipulated in Islam. We are reflecting on these things in order to help us achieve humbleness and attentiveness when offering our *ṣalāh*.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Ghāfir (40), Verse 60.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ṢALĀH IN THE NOBLE QUR'ĀN AND ḤADĪTH

The importance of *ṣalāh* is stressed throughout the Noble Qur'ān. The actual word *"ṣalāh"* is mentioned 67 times in the Qur'ān. This is just one indication of how important this act is in the eyes of Allah ﷻ. When the Qur'ān describes the qualities of true believers, it often lists *ṣalāh* as the first practical sign of a believer: In Sūrah al-Mu'minūn, Allah ﷻ says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ۝

"Successful indeed are the believers,
who are humble in their prayers."[2]

The importance of *ṣalāh* is further emphasized in many *ḥadīth* of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ who have stated that *ṣalāh* is a pillar of our religion. They use the analogy that religion is like a tent, with *ṣalāh* being the posts or poles that hold up the tent. If these poles are not looked after and they fall down, then the entire tent will collapse.[3]

Various *ḥadīth* also emphasize that there is no action which takes precedence over the prayers. For example, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ said: "There is no action in the eyes of Allah, the Exalted and Mighty, that is better than *ṣalāh*. Therefore, a person must not let any worldly thing stop them from performing the *ṣalāh* at its prime time."[4]

In the Qur'ān, Allah ﷻ condemns those who are negligent of their *ṣalāh*. He says: "So woe to those who pray, but are heedless of their prayers."[5]

Imām ʿAlī ﷺ said: "The entire deeds of a human being will vanish, except for that deed which was done sincerely for Allah."[6]

Even during the most intense battles, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ would stop to pray whenever it was time for *ṣalāh*.[7] On the battlefield of Karbalā', Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ and his companions stopped to pray, even though they were being showered with arrows! Some of his followers were killed while they were offering their prayers, and others were martyred protecting the Imām ﷺ and his family while they prayed.[8]

QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION

Ṣalāh صَلاة (a specific method of praying to Allah as prescribed in Islam)

- Arabic Root Word: ص ل و ṣ-l-w
- Root Meaning: supplication, invocation
- Related Word: مُصَلّى *(muṣallā)* which means 'a place of prayer.'
  Note: adding a م to the beginning of an Arabic root word turns the word into a "place of" or "state of"
- Reference for مُصَلّى in the Noble Qur'ān: Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 125.

2 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23), Verses 1-2.
3 Rayshahrī, Muḥammad, *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, Pp. 10546-10550.
4 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 10, P. 89.
5 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Māʿūn (107), Verses 4-5.
6 Āmidi, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, Vol. 1, P. 75.
7 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 83, P. 23.
8 Shaykh Mufīd, *Al-Irshād,* Vol. 2, P. 105.

KHUSHŪʿ AND KHUḌŪʿ (HUMBLENESS AND ATTENTIVENESS) IN ṢALĀH

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

Prayer is not merely (about) your standing and your sitting. Rather, it is your sincerity and purity (ikhlās) through which your goal should only be to seek the contentment of Allah.[9]

Thus, when we are going in the presence of the King of all kings, we should enter that meeting with the right demeanor. This means entering into this action with our utmost attention, and approaching Allah ﷻ in a state of complete humility. After all, we are 'meeting' the All-Powerful, the All-Merciful, and the All-Great! There are two types of humility that we must strive to observe: *khushūʿ* (internal humility and humbleness), and *khuḍūʿ* (external humility and attentiveness). *Khushūʿ* is when a person's heart and thoughts are humble, and focused on Allah ﷻ. This is a direct result of understanding the Greatness and Power of Allah ﷻ. *Khuḍūʿ* refers to the humbleness of our external body in front of Allah ﷻ; and this can be seen through performing the set actions of *ṣalāh*, such as *rukūʿ* and *sujūd*, in a correct manner.

STOP AND REFLECT: Many of us know the importance of *ṣalāh*. However, we often find it difficult to concentrate and pay attention when we are praying. What are some of the reasons why we find it so hard to focus during our *ṣalāh*?

ATTENTION DURING ṢALĀH

We have learned that *ṣalāh* is the most important action in our daily lives, and it has great rewards for us—both in this world and the Hereafter. However, our *ṣalāh* is only accepted and brings about benefits to the degree of how much attention we pay to Allah ﷻ, and our status before Him during *ṣalāh*. As we see in the verse of Sūrah al-Muʾminūn discussed above in this lesson, the believers who will be successful are those who are humble in their prayers and who are aware that they are standing in front of Allah ﷻ.

When we offer our physical *ṣalāh*, our jurisprudential *(fiqhī)* responsibility is complete and written for us as being fulfilled. However, if we offer that *ṣalāh* without humility *(khushūʿ),* then we are not able to benefit from the connection and closeness to Allah ﷻ that we hope to attain. *Ḥadīth* confirm that only those parts of the prayer during which our attention is present and we are humble toward Allah ﷻ will be truly accepted with the effect that the prayer should have on our heart and soul.[10] The parts where we are not paying attention, or are thinking about something other than Allah ﷻ will not be accepted.[11]

9 *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah,* Vol. 3, P. 61.
10 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 3, P. 300.
11 Daylamī, Abū Shujāʿ, *Al-Firdaws*, Vol. 5, P. 195.

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:
"A person prays, but only a sixth or a tenth of it is written down (as reward) for them. Only that (amount) which they were present in (and had concentration) will be written for them."[12]

STOP AND REFLECT: Think of a conversation you recently had with someone where you were not fully paying attention. Do you remember much of the talk? Did you benefit much from that conversation or not really? How is this similar to *ṣalāh*?

This means we should try to focus and concentrate on our conversation with Allah ﷻ during our *ṣalāh* in order to truly benefit from the prayer as Allah ﷻ intended for us.

One strategy that might help us improve our attention during *ṣalāh* is to reduce any physical distractions during *ṣalāh*. It is important to pray in a place and at a time where we are not distracted. For example, praying somewhere we can hear the TV while it is on, or if we can hear our family or friends talking will naturally distract us in our *ṣalāh*. Whenever possible, we should try to pray in a place which is reasonably quiet, and where distractions are minimal. It is highly recommended to have a regular place where we pray in our home. This place becomes blessed, and in fact glorifies Allah ﷻ along with us as we pray.

THE WISDOMS BEHIND ṢALĀH

We may often wonder about some of the aspects of the *ṣalāh* we offer as Muslims. We may see that other religions do not have a prayer that is prescribed in terms of its time or form. Or if they do, we may observe that it is not practiced by many followers of that religion, and it is not given as much importance as the daily *ṣalāh* is given in Islam. We may have noticed that in shared places of worship such as prayer rooms in universities, hospitals, or similar public places, it is usually mostly the Muslims who are seen present there to recite their *ṣalāh*.

TRY THIS AT HOME:

One of the most important ways of remembering Allah ﷻ in our prayer is to remember Him outside of prayer as well. Try for a few days to begin every action with *bismillāh*, and end with saying *alḥamdulillāh*. Don't just say it, but mean it as well! Then see whether it's easier to remember Allah ﷻ when you are in your prayer.

12 *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah,* P. 3626.

Activity 3.3a: Reflection Activity

What are some of the possible wisdoms behind the *ṣalāh* in Islam the way that it has been prescribed by Allah ﷻ, and the way we are told to practice it? Why does it have set times? Why does it have to be offered so often every single day? Why does it have specific prescribed actions like standing, bowing, and prostrating?

The daily *ṣalāh* prescribed in Islam is unique. It has specific timings with set actions, and is obligated to perform five times every day. In order to reach a higher level of perfection, we are required to do things exactly as they are prescribed. For example, when coding, if you miss even one bracket, then the code will not function as intended and will not give you the desired result. Similarly, we are required to pray in a specified manner in order to reach higher levels of closeness to Allah ﷻ. When we take some time to reflect on this, we come to appreciate that this is in fact one of the great blessings that Allah ﷻ has granted us. If our daily *ṣalāh* was not obligatory and did not have set times and actions, then we would most likely not pray at all or rarely pray. This would lead us to become negligent of Allah ﷻ, forget our purpose in this world, and not appreciate the true beauty of the religion of Islam. Our journey toward reaching our perfection would be very much jeopardized, and we would lose out on the worldly and spiritual benefits of *ṣalāh*. If there was not one set way to pray for everyone, then we would not be able to easily pray in congregation, and reap the benefits of coming together as a community to serve Allah ﷻ!

The main reason we pray is because Allah ﷻ has commanded and prescribed it for us; however we also see that the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ have given us many insights into some of the wisdoms behind *ṣalāh* and its form. Reflecting upon and appreciating the unique form of the Muslim prayer and its benefits may help us achieve more humbleness and better attentiveness during *ṣalāh*.

Activity 3.3b: Jigsaw!

Each student will receive one *ḥadīth* to read and reflect on for five minutes.

- **5 minutes:** Read your *ḥadīth* and write down one or two points of reflection, and one question that arises for you.
- **3 minutes:** Find all of the other students in your class with the same *ḥadīth*—this is now your expert group! Once you are in that group, each student will have a role (you can pick among yourselves who wants to do what): Discussion leader, recorder (takes notes), researcher (goes through everyone's notes and summarizes them), and presenter.
- **15 minutes**: In your expert group, reread the *ḥadīth* and discuss ideas, thoughts, and questions. As a group, come up with three key points that the presenter can share with the class in order to teach them about the *ḥadīth* that was assigned to your group.

Ḥadīth #1

Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ said:

Ṣalāh reaffirms sincerity, and purifies a person from arrogance. [13]

Ḥadīth #2

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ was asked about the wisdom behind *ṣalāh* when it causes people to become physically tired, and occupies them from fulfilling their other needs. In response, he replied:

It has (many) reasons. If people were left without any instructions or reminder about the message of the Prophet ﷺ...they would have been misled like those before them were misled….Allah ﷻ wanted to make sure they do not forget the religion of Muḥammad ﷺ so He made ṣalāh obligatory upon them. They (are made to) remember five times a day… [14]

Ḥadīth #3

Imām ʿAlī ar-Riḍā ﷺ said:

...it (meaning the ṣalāh) contains a regular remembrance of Allah ﷻ in the day and the night. This is so a servant does not forget one's Master and Cherisher and Creator...The remembrance of one's Creator, and standing before Him (should) stop one from sinning, and prevent one from different types of corruption. [15]

13 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10572.
14 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10576.
15 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10577.

Jigsaw Student Handout: Ḥadīth #1

Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ said: "*Ṣalāh* reaffirms sincerity and purifies a person from arrogance."[16]

16 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10572.

Jigsaw Student Handout: Ḥadīth #2

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ was asked about the wisdom behind *ṣalāh* when it causes people to become physically tired, and occupies them from fulfilling their other needs. In response, he replied: "It has (many) reasons. If people were left without any instructions or reminder about the message of the Prophet ﷺ...they would have been misled like those before them were misled….Allah ﷻ wanted to make sure they do not forget the religion of Muḥammad ﷺ so He made *ṣalāh* obligatory upon them. They (are made to) remember five times a day…" [17]

17 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10576.

Jigsaw Student Handout: Ḥadīth #3

Imām ʿAlī ar-Riḍā ﷺ said: "...it (meaning the *ṣalāh*) contains a regular remembrance of Allah ﷻ in the day and the night. This is so a servant does not forget one's Master and Cherisher and Creator...The remembrance of one's Creator, and standing before Him (should) stop one from sinning, and prevent one from different types of corruption."[18]

18 *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, P. 10577.

Activity 3.3c: Action Plan

The best way to make a change is to make a plan! Brainstorm three steps you want to implement today in order to try and increase the presence of your heart in *ṣalāh*. One step should focus on your body, the second step should focus on your mind, and the third should focus on your heart.

O Allah, help me increase my *khushūʿ* in *ṣalāh* in order to reach nearness to You *(qurbatan ilallāh)*. InshāʾAllāh I plan to:

Prepare my body for *ṣalāh* by:

Remove distractions from my mind by:

Turn my heart toward You, O Allah, by:

CHAPTER 4

Further Furūʿ ad-Dīn

4.1 Fasting

4.2 Charity (Zakāh)

4.1 Fasting

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Recognize the many physical and spiritual benefits of fasting.
- Examine the different levels of fasting.
- Identify what invalidates the fast.

AL-MARZŪQ:
full of sustenance

MIḌMĀR:
a special training period for a great competition

THE MONTH OF RAMAḌĀN

The month of Ramaḍān is a very sacred and special month in Islam. In it, we have the honor of fasting in obedience to Allah ﷻ, and gaining the treasures of self-control and self-restraint for the pleasure of Allah. We seek to attain God-consciousness ***(taqwā)*** at a higher level. The month of Ramaḍān is full of blessings and mercy, where even our sleep and breathing is considered as worship and glorification for us.

During the lifetime of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, the blessed month of Ramaḍān was given the title of ***al-Marzūq***, which means 'full of sustenance' due to the abundance of the blessings of Allah ﷻ during this month. It is also known as ***Miḍmār***, which means 'a special training period for a great competition.' The month of Ramaḍān is also a catalyst for burning away sins, abandoning bad habits, and implementing good practices. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

"The month of Ramaḍān was named so because it burns away *(yarmiḍu)* the sins"[1]

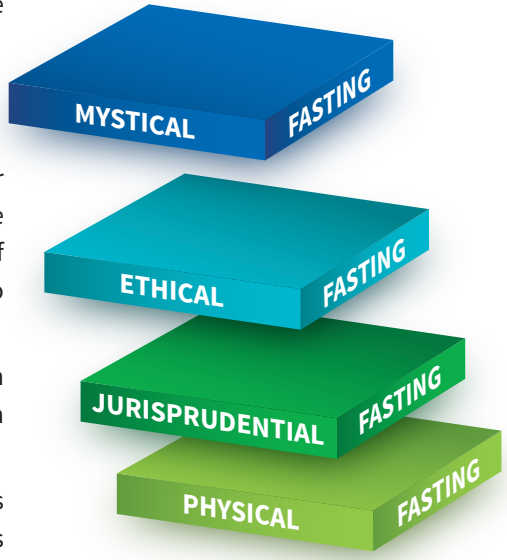
QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION
Ramaḍān رمضان (The 9th month of the Islamic calendar)
- Arabic Root Word: ر م ض r-m-ḍ
- Root Meaning: Intense heat; scorching; burning
- Occurrences in the Noble Qur'ān: 1 time
- Reference: Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 185.

STOP AND REFLECT: How does the meaning of the word *Ramaḍān* relate to the sacred month of Ramaḍān?

1 Muttaqī Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl,* Ḥadīth #23688.

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FASTING

As we refrain from food and water during the month of Ramaḍān, all of our organs should also join in by refraining from any kinds of sins. Imām Aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said: "When you fast, let your hearing and your vision abstain with you from anything unlawful and everything ugly—leave aside hypocrisy, and do not harm those who serve you. Instead, adorn yourself with the dignity of a fast, and do not make your fasting day the same as a day when you are not fasting."[2]



This *ḥadīth* hints at the idea that there are different levels of fasting:

1. **Physical Fasting:** This is where a person follows a certain diet so they do not eat or drink certain things; it can also include practices such as intermittent fasting. There are no benefits in the Hereafter for doing this unless someone has the intention of fasting this way to keep their body healthy because it is a trust from Allah ﷻ, and so they can serve Him better.
2. **Jurisprudential Fasting:** This is fasting as prescribed by the laws of Islam, in which a person avoids certain things such as drinking and eating, etc. from dawn until *Maghrib*.
3. **Ethical Fasting:** This is a higher level where a person not only avoids the things which break the fast from a jurisprudential point of view, but also avoids any sins with every organ of one's body. We should make it our aim and goal at the beginning of every month of Ramaḍān that our fast will not only be a jurisprudential fast, but also an ethical fast.
4. **Mystical Fasting:** This is the highest form of fasting where a person abstains from everything other than being in the presence and remembrance of Allah ﷻ.

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some practical things we can do to achieve the ethical level of fasting?

In addition to fasting, because of the special rewards in the month of Ramaḍān, there are a few additional actions that are highly recommended and very rewarding to perform, such as:

- Reciting the Noble Qurʾān more often (every single verse that a person recites in the month of Ramaḍān will be given the reward of having recited the entire Qurʾān in any other month of the year).
- Worshiping (e.g., reciting *mustaḥāb* prayers, *duʿās*, etc.), especially during the nights.
- Avoiding all forms of sins (e.g., swearing, being rude to parents, etc.).
- Spending more time in Islamic centers and *masājid,* and in the company of pious people.
- Refraining from wasting any time.

2 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 94, P. 351.

Activity 4.1a: Ethical Fasting Worksheet

In an effort to prepare for the month of Ramaḍān, Fatima makes a list of common sins that are often committed by different body parts which she aims to avoid. Help her fill in the chart below.

BODY PART	COMMON SINS	ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS
Eyes		
Ears	Listening to forbidden music	
Mouth	Backbiting	Defend the person who is being talked about; or change the topic; or leave the gathering/conversation
Stomach	Overeating	
Brain/Thoughts		

BENEFITS OF FASTING

Fasting has many benefits for us. We will look at some of them here.

1. God-consciousness *(Taqwā)*

Taqwā is being conscious and careful of our duties toward Allah ﷻ, and protecting ourselves against those things that harm our soul. One of the main goals of fasting, according to the Qurʾān, is that it should help us attain *taqwā*. When we fast, we are controlling some of our biggest desires, such as hunger and thirst. We cannot live without food and water as they are very precious to us. In this special month, however, we train ourselves to temporarily keep away from that which we like and is permissible for us. This action strengthens our soul, and helps us to refrain from doing those things which are forbidden for us.

2. Self-Building

Most of us find it very difficult to change our bad habits. The month of Ramaḍān is a great opportunity to make positive changes in our lives and daily routines. When we fast, our eating, drinking, and sleeping habits already change, so it can be a great catalyst for making other positive changes in our lives as well.

3. Health Benefits

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Fast, and you will be healthy."[3] There is a lot of medical literature that confirms the physical health benefits of fasting. In recent years, we have come to learn more about the benefits of fasting, and it has even become a health trend. While this should not be the sole intention for fasting, it is definitely one of the benefits of it.[4]

4. Sharing and Caring

Imām Ḥasan Al-ʿAskarī ؑ explained one of the wisdoms behind fasting as: "So that the rich person may feel the pain of hunger, and due to this, be compassionate to the poor."[5]

When we are fasting, we become aware about some of the possible extravagances in our consumption, and feel the sufferings of other people. This should hopefully encourage us to change our spending habits, and help others who are in need.

THE INTENTION TO FAST

Fasting, in the Islamic sense, means that a person abstains from certain actions—which will be mentioned later on—from the time of *Fajr* prayer (dawn) until *Maghrib*. An important part of fasting is to make the intention to fast. Before we fast, we have to know in our minds that we are keeping an obligatory fast, during the month of Ramaḍān, and we are doing this in obedience to the command of Allah ﷻ.

The time for this intention of an obligatory fast is specific. We can make our intention at two possible times:

1. Before the beginning of *Fajr,* every morning we are fasting.
2. At the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān, when we make the intention to fast every day during this month.

The way we know that the month of Ramaḍān has started is by sighting the crescent moon for the month of Ramaḍān the night before, or when 30 days in the month of Shaʿbān are complete. We determine the end of the month of Ramaḍān and the day of Eid by sighting the crescent moon for the month of Shawwāl, or when 30 days in the month of Ramaḍān have passed.

3 Muḥaddith Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil,* Vol. 7, P. 502.
4 Taylor, M. (2020, August 12), *9 reasons fasting is actually good for you*. Greatist. Retrieved December 18, 2022, from https://greatist.com/health/benefits-of-fasting#weight-loss
5 Rayshahrī, Muḥammad, *Mīzān Al-Ḥikmah*, Ḥadīth #10915.

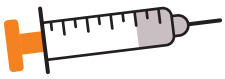
INVALIDATORS OF THE FAST

There are certain things which invalidate or break our fast. The table below lists some of the common actions that we come across in our everyday lives.

✗ FAST IS INVALID ✓ FAST IS VALID

ACTION	If Done on Purpose (Intentionally)	If Done by Accident (Unintentionally)	NOTES
Eating or drinking	✗	✓	If one accidentally swallows any food particles that remain between the teeth, then the fast is valid; but if one does so on purpose, then the fast will become void.
Brushing your teeth	✓	✓	One must not swallow any external water, toothpaste, or saliva that has been mixed with the toothpaste, otherwise the fast will become invalidated.
Rinsing mouth with water	✓	✓	One must not swallow any water deliberately.
Inhalers	✓	✓	
Using eye drops, ear drops, or nose sprays	✓	✓	It is not permissible to apply medicine, or put water, or any other substance through the nose or in the eyes if you know that the substance will reach the throat. If it reaches the throat, then the fast will become void. Āyatullāh Khamenei: It is *makrūh* to apply medicine through the nose (e.g. nasal sprays) when fasting.
Throwing up	✗	✓	Intentionally vomiting (for example, if someone has a queasy stomach and they make themselves throw up), then their fast will become invalidated. Also, stomach acid or food that comes up when belching should not be swallowed intentionally.
Inhaling thick smoke	✗ according to obligatory precaution (*iḥtiyāṭ wājib*)	✓	Examples of thick smoke: • Smoke from cigarettes or tobacco • Smoke from a fire, or from the exhaust of a truck We are allowed to inhale steam, but if it condenses in the mouth and turns into water, then if you swallow it on purpose, your fast will become void.
Swallowing thick dust	✗ according to obligatory precaution (*iḥtiyāṭ wājib*)	✗	An example of thick dust is dusty air from sweeping a dusty ground. If the dust reaches the throat, then it breaks one's fast. Allowing thin dust in the air to reach the throat will not invalidate one's fast. If thick dust is whipped up by the wind, and a person notices it, but is not careful to avoid it and allows the dust to reach one's throat, then the fast will become void on the basis of obligatory precaution.
Attributing a lie to Allah ﷻ or one of the Maʿṣūmīn ﷺ	✗ according to obligatory precaution (*iḥtiyāṭ wājib*)	✓	If you want to quote a *ḥadīth* or Qurʾān while you are fasting, then be accurate and give the reference. If you are not sure, then report it in such a way that it is not directly attributed to the Prophet ﷺ or the Imāms ﷺ. For example, one can say: "It has been narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said…" Quotes that are often attributed to the Prophet ﷺ or Imāms ﷺ on social media are sometimes inaccurate, and often do not include a reference. Be careful about forwarding/reposting these quotes, especially when one is fasting.

Below are some rulings of various actions that vary according to two of the *marājiʿ*:

ACTION	ĀYATULLĀH SĪSTĀNĪ	ĀYATULLĀH KHAMENEI
Swallowing phlegm or mucus that comes up into your mouth	It is okay to swallow it if it has not entered the cavity of the mouth. If it has entered the cavity of the mouth, then the recommended precaution *(iḥtiyāṭ mustaḥab)* is not to swallow it.	It is okay to swallow it if it has not entered the cavity of the mouth. If it has entered the cavity of the mouth and you swallow it intentionally, then your fast will become void. *NOTE: Swallowing saliva does not invalidate the fast.*
Submerging your head underwater	Immersing the entire head in water does not invalidate the fast, but it is highly disapproved *(makrūh),* and it is a recommended precaution *(iḥtiyāṭ mustaḥab)* to avoid this.	According to obligatory precaution *(iḥtiyāṭ wājib)*, the fast will become invalidated if someone intentionally submerges their entire head under water when fasting. *NOTE: This rule does not apply to showering.* *This rule applies to swimming, unless a person can manage to make sure that one's entire head does not go under water at a particular time. Therefore, swimming while fasting is not advisable.*
Injections or IV 	Injections and intravenous (IV) drips do not invalidate a fast even if the former is an energy injection and the latter a glucose-saline drip.	The fast is valid if it is injected into the muscles and is for treatment or preventative purposes (not for nutrition). Intravenous injections (IV) (injected into the veins) that are for nutritional purposes invalidate the fast.

INDIVIDUALS EXEMPT FROM FASTING

Due to certain circumstances, various people are exempt from fasting:

- Someone who has a condition in which fasting would significantly harm their health *(One of the ways of knowing whether fasting is harmful for a person's health or not, is if it is confirmed by a qualified health professional, and the person is satisfied by this opinion.)*
- A pregnant woman for whom fasting may be harmful for her or her unborn child.
- A woman who is breastfeeding if fasting affects her milk supply.
- A person who finds it impossible or excessively difficult to fast due to old age.
- A traveler who is traveling out of town a specified distance (approximately 28 miles/44 km roundtrip) from the border of their hometown, if certain other conditions are met.

FASTING AND SICKNESS

The laws that Allah ﷻ sets for us are out of His mercy. They are not meant to cause us intolerable difficulty or harm. Therefore, there are exceptions for fasting if someone is sick:

- If a person knows or has a reasonable fear that they will get sick or be harmed by fasting, then they should not fast, in fact, their fast will be invalid if they still fast.[6]
- If a person is sick and knows or has a reasonable fear that fasting will (1) make them more sick, (2) increase their pain, or (3) delay their recovery, then they should not fast, and if they do still fast, their fast will not be valid.
- If a person is sick, but fasting is not harmful to their health, then their fast will be valid.

Sickness does not include normally acceptable or bearable levels of hunger, thirst, weariness, headaches, and other difficulties that go away within a couple of hours after *ifṭār*. Such things are normally considered tolerable by rational people.

MISSED FASTS

If a person misses a fast due to a valid reason, such as an illness or travel, then they need to make up that fast. Making up a missed fast should be done with the intention of *qaḍāʾ*. In some cases, in addition to the *qaḍāʾ* (for example, if they did not make up the *qaḍāʾ* fast before the next month of Ramaḍān), then one must also pay a compensation called ***fidyah***—which means that one has to feed a poor believer 750g of staple food for each missed day. There are other cases where *fidyah* becomes obligatory as well, one can refer to the books of Jurisprudence for more detailed information in regards to this.

If someone misses or breaks a fast without a valid reason, then they must make up that fast, and offer a ***kaffārah***—which is a penalty that we will learn about later on.

6 A doctor's opinion can be the source of fear of harm or sickness, but if a person is certain that fasting will not cause them any harm despite what the doctor says, then they must fast.

Activity 4.1b: Review Questions

1. Ethical fasting refers to:
   a. Avoiding sins with all organs of our body during the month of Ramaḍān
   b. Being nice to people during the month of Ramaḍān
   c. Going on an intermittent fasting diet during the month of Ramaḍān

2. We must make the intention to fast:
   a. On the day we are fasting
   b. Before we begin to fast
   c. Anytime we want

3. Reciting the Noble Qurʾān:
   a. Is highly recommended during the month of Ramaḍān
   b. Is the same as reciting any other time of the year
   c. Is not recommended during the month of Ramaḍān

4. Brushing your teeth without swallowing anything is:
   a. Not allowed when you are fasting
   b. Allowed when one is fasting
   c. Obligatory when you are fasting

5. If a person is walking somewhere and the wind blows up a thick dust, then they:
   a. Have no obligation to cover their mouth or avoid the dust
   b. Should cover their mouth and avoid the dust in order to keep their fast valid
   c. Should cough

6. Hasan is a follower *(muqallīd)* of Āyatullāh Khamenei. He has swimming class during the month of Ramaḍān, so he must:
   a. Avoid swimming all together
   b. Can swim as long as he does not submerge his entire head (although it is better for him not to swim)
   c. Can swim as he usual does

7. Sukaina is getting a slight headache near the end of fast, but still thinks she can make it to the end of the fast, so what should she do in this case:
   a. She must continue her fast
   b. She can break her fast if she would like to
   c. She should ask her parents if she should finish the fast or not

8. Husayn is taking a day trip to see his sister who lives downtown in the month of Ramaḍān. His home is within the city limits, but is more than a 28 mile round-trip from downtown. Is Husayn's fast valid?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4.2 Charity (Zakāh)

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Understand and investigate the connection between prayer *(ṣalāh)* and charity *(zakāh)*.
- Define *zakāh* as meaning purification, and as the general term used in the Qurʾān for being charitable.
- Establish *zakāh* as a means of purification, a loan to Allah ﷻ, and trading with Allah ﷻ for something higher.
- Outline different forms of charity, such as through education, helping others, and with one's wealth.
- Define *khums* as literally meaning 'one-fifth' which involves giving one-fifth (20%) of our savings and unused items at the end of one year.
- Compare the rewards of meeting the needs of fellow believers to the highest rewards in Islam; and understand that benefiting others and removing harm from their path are also considered forms of charity.

Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān:

قُلْ لِعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خِلَالٌ

Say to My believing servants that they should establish the prayer and spend out of that which We have given them, secretly and openly, before the coming of the Day in which there shall be no trade, nor mutual befriending. [1]

Being charitable is one of the most emphasized actions in Islam, and is an essential part of our religion. In the Noble Qurʾān, this act is usually paired with offering prayers *(ṣalāh)*. When the Qurʾān describes the believers, it usually mentions that they are: *"those who establish prayers (ṣalāh) and give charity (zakāh)."*

We also learn from the narrations of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ that charity has many benefits for us in our lives—both in this world and the next.

The Noble Prophet ﷺ said:

> "Give charity, and cure your sick ones through the giving of charity. Surely, charity repels accidents and illnesses, and is a source of increasing your lifespan and good deeds." [2]

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some of the different forms of charity *(zakāh)* that you can think of? List as many as you can.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14), Verse 31.
2 Muttaqī Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, Ḥadīth #16113.

Activity 4.2a: Benefits of Ṣalāh and Zakāh

1. Why do you think Allah ﷻ chose to pair *ṣalāh* with *zakāh*?
2. What characteristics might each of these actions instill within us? For example, *zakāh* might instill the trait of selflessness in an individual. Could *ṣalāh* do the same?
3. Besides personality and character benefits, what are some other life benefits that *ṣalāh* and *zakāh* offer, and where do these benefits or traits overlap? Complete the venn diagram below to answer the question.

ZAKĀH IN THE QURʾĀN

Zakāh is a general term that has been used in the Qurʾān for being charitable. Its literal meaning is 'purification.' In original Arabic, it was used to refer to the growth and nurturing of a tree or plant in the best way possible. The process of helping a plant grow in the best way often occurs through pruning or cutting away parts of a tree. Therefore we may learn from this that one of the ways of allowing our wealth and resources to grow in the best way is to give some of it away for the sake of Allah ﷻ. It may be that this term has been used by Allah ﷻ to teach us that when we give some of our wealth for His sake, it helps the remaining wealth that stays with us grow in a good and pure way. The Noble Qurʾān describes charity in the following ways:

A Means of Purification

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا…

Take, from their possessions, (some) charity to cleanse them and purify them thereby…[3]

A Loan to Allah ﷻ

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ۝

Who is there who will offer Allah a good loan so that He will multiply it for them; and they will have an excellent reward? [4]

Even though Allah ﷻ is the true Owner of everything we have, He still describes spending for His sake or in His way as a loan; and when we give this loan to Him, He promises to return it to us many times over.

Trading with Allah ﷻ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۝ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

O you who believe! Shall I guide you to a transaction (deal) that will save you from a painful punishment? Have faith in Allah and His Messenger, and strive in the way of Allah with your wealth and your selves. That is better for you, if you only knew. [5]

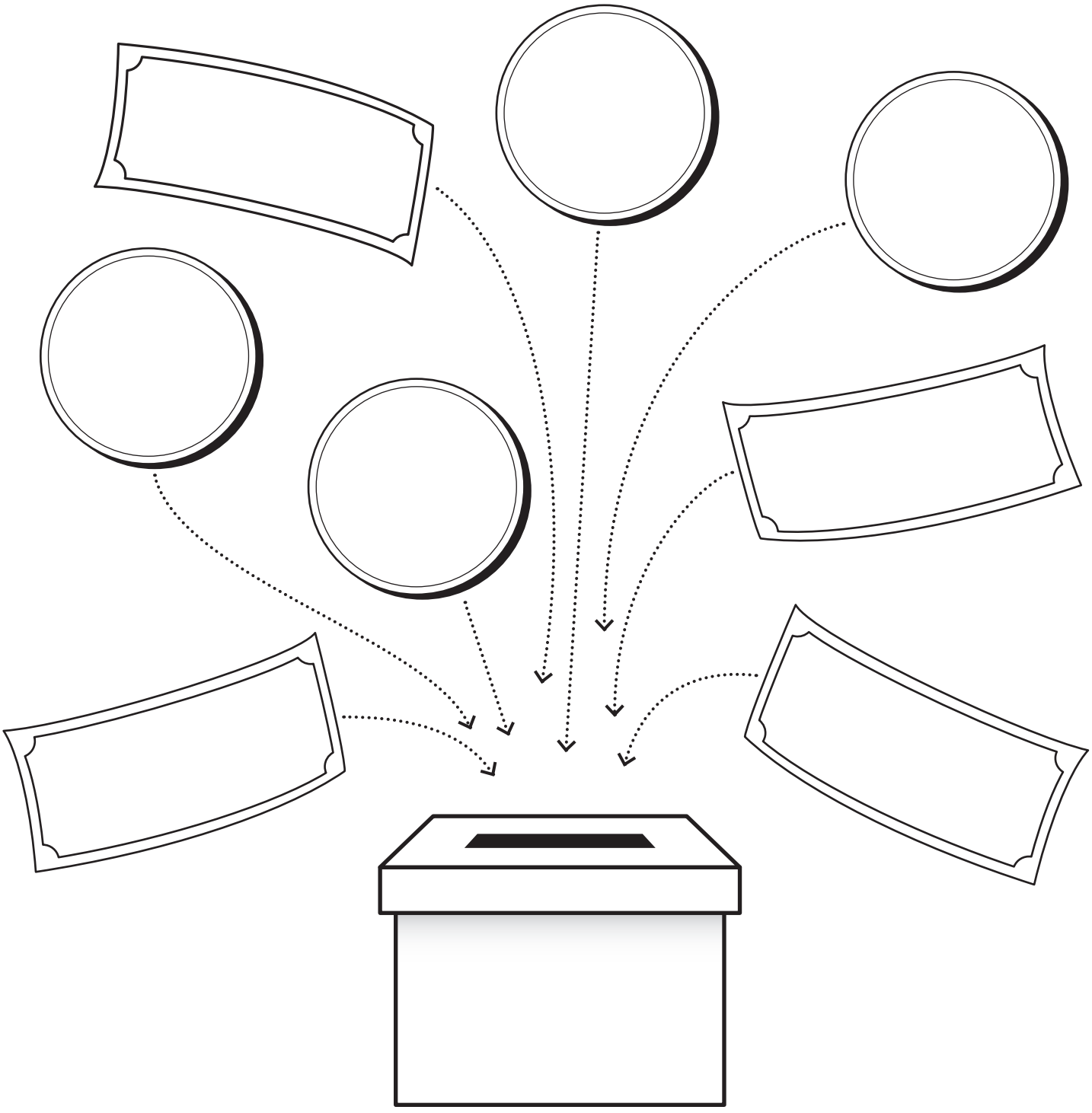
Allah ﷻ describes spending in His way as an investment. When we invest with other people, we hope to make a profit, but there is a chance that we may lose out. However, when we invest with Allah ﷻ, He guarantees that we will earn great profits.

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah at-Tawbah (9), Verse 103.
4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥadīd (57), Verse 11.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaff (61), Verses 10-11.

Activity 4.2b: Spending for the Sake of Allah ﷻ

In what ways is spending in the way of Allah ﷻ a better way to invest our money than in worldly stock markets and investment banks? Using the graphic organizer below, brainstorm some benefits that we will receive when we spend our wealth in the way of Allah ﷻ.

THE BENEFITS OF INVESTING WITH ALLAH ﷻ



FORMS OF CHARITY

Charity can take on many forms, some of which are mentioned below:

- **TIME/EFFORT:** using our time to help a person with a certain task.
- **EDUCATION/SKILLS:** using our skills or talents to help someone who requires those specific skills; or teaching them those skills so that they can use them in the future.
- **KINDNESS:** we can help a person by listening to them, and responding with kind or helpful words.
- **FINANCIAL:** we can donate some money to those who are in need, or less fortunate than us.

Types of Financial Charity

MUSTAḤAB

ṢADAQAH that we give on a regular basis to protect ourselves from calamities and to help those in need.

GENERAL DONATIONS or other types of financial help, like spending on one's immediately family members or relatives *(khayrāt / infāq)*.

WĀJIB

KHUMS: one-fifth of our yearly savings, or on items not used for an entire year.

ZAKĀH (specific meaning): A specified percentage (for example, 2.5% or 10% or 20%) that needs to be given on specific items with certain conditions.

ZAKĀT AL-FIṬRAH: This is a wajib charity that must be given on the day of *Eid al-Fiṭr* by the breadwinner of the family for oneself, and each one of their dependents.

NADHR/ʿAHD (Conditional Promise): When a person makes a verbal promise between Allah ﷻ and oneself to give some charity under certain conditions. The promise must meet some guidelines.

QASAM (Oath): When one swears by Allah ﷻ to give a certain amount in charity.

KAFFĀRAH: A penalty that requires a person to spend from their wealth to feed the poor. Some of the reasons for having to give *kaffārah* include:

- Missing fasts, or breaking fasts in the month of Ramaḍān without a valid reason.
- Breaking one's oath/promise to Allah ﷻ.
- Violating certain conditions in *Ḥajj*

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

1. Was there a category of charity that surprised you? Why did you find it surprising?
2. How many types of charity have you taken part in so far? What is one kind of charity that you would like to take part in soon? Why did you choose this type?

KHUMS

Having briefly reviewed the different types of charity in Islam, we will now focus on *khums*, which is a particular type of obligatory fiscal charity that Muslims must pay. It is the most common type of charity that is obligatory *(wājib)* for believers to practice. *Khums* literally means 'one-fifth' and it involves giving one-fifth (20%) of our excess or saved income at the end of one year to charity. We also need to take out *khums* on gifts or items that were not used in the first year of ownership. A person should have a date on which they calculate this type of charity. On this date, they need to calculate how much money they have saved or invested in that year (i.e., money that was left over after their ordinary expenses have been met throughout the year). From that amount, they must then pay 20% of this to a cause that is approved by their *marjaʿ*.

Khums has been expressly mentioned in the Noble Qurʾān, and was emphasized by the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. Allah ﷻ clearly states:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَأَنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ...

"And Know that whatever of a thing you acquire, a fifth of it is for Allah, and for the Messenger, and for (his) near relatives, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer...." [6]

6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Anfāl (8), Verse 41.

Activity 4.2c: Critical Analysis

Answer the following questions in depth.

1. Why do you think there is so much emphasis in Islam on giving charity?

2. What are some of the benefits for those receiving charity?

3. What are some of the benefits that those who give in charity will receive?

4. When Allah ﷻ declares that He will return a loan to us many times over, or give us multiple profits on our investments, what does this mean?

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE BELIEVERS

As we discussed earlier, *zakāh* is not just limited to financial donations. It can take on many other forms. One of these important forms of charity is to meet the needs of our fellow Muslim brothers and sisters using whatever means we can with our time, skills, talents, or words. This is one of the most rewarding actions that can be performed.

In a famous exchange between Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ and one of his companions during a trip to *Ḥajj*, the Imām ﷺ was explaining the rewards for each of the actions in the rites of *Ḥajj*. The companion was amazed by these, and wondered at the great rewards of each action.

The Imām ﷺ then asked him: "Do you want me to teach you something that brings even greater rewards than these?"

The companion replied: "Is there such an act?"

The Imām ﷺ said: "Yes, fulfilling the need of a believer is better than (performing) one *Ḥajj*, and another *Ḥajj*, and another *Ḥajj*…" he continued until he counted 10 *Ḥajj* pilgrimages.[7]

Here, the Imām ﷺ was referring to *mustaḥab Ḥajj* after one's obligatory one is completed. After describing its great rewards, he then used the opportunity to teach us that as incredibly rewarding as *Ḥajj* is, meeting the needs of a fellow believer is even more rewarding than 10 *mustaḥab Ḥajj* trips.

In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ compares the reward of meeting the needs of a fellow believer to *iʿtikāf*. *Iʿtikāf* is a ritual in which a person secludes oneself from the world by staying in a masjid and engaging in worship for at least a minimum of three consecutive days. As you can imagine, this is a highly rewarding act! The Prophet ﷺ said:

> "Walking with a fellow believer to help them in their need is dearer to Allah than performing *iʿtikāf* in Masjid al-Ḥarām (in Mecca) for two months."[8]

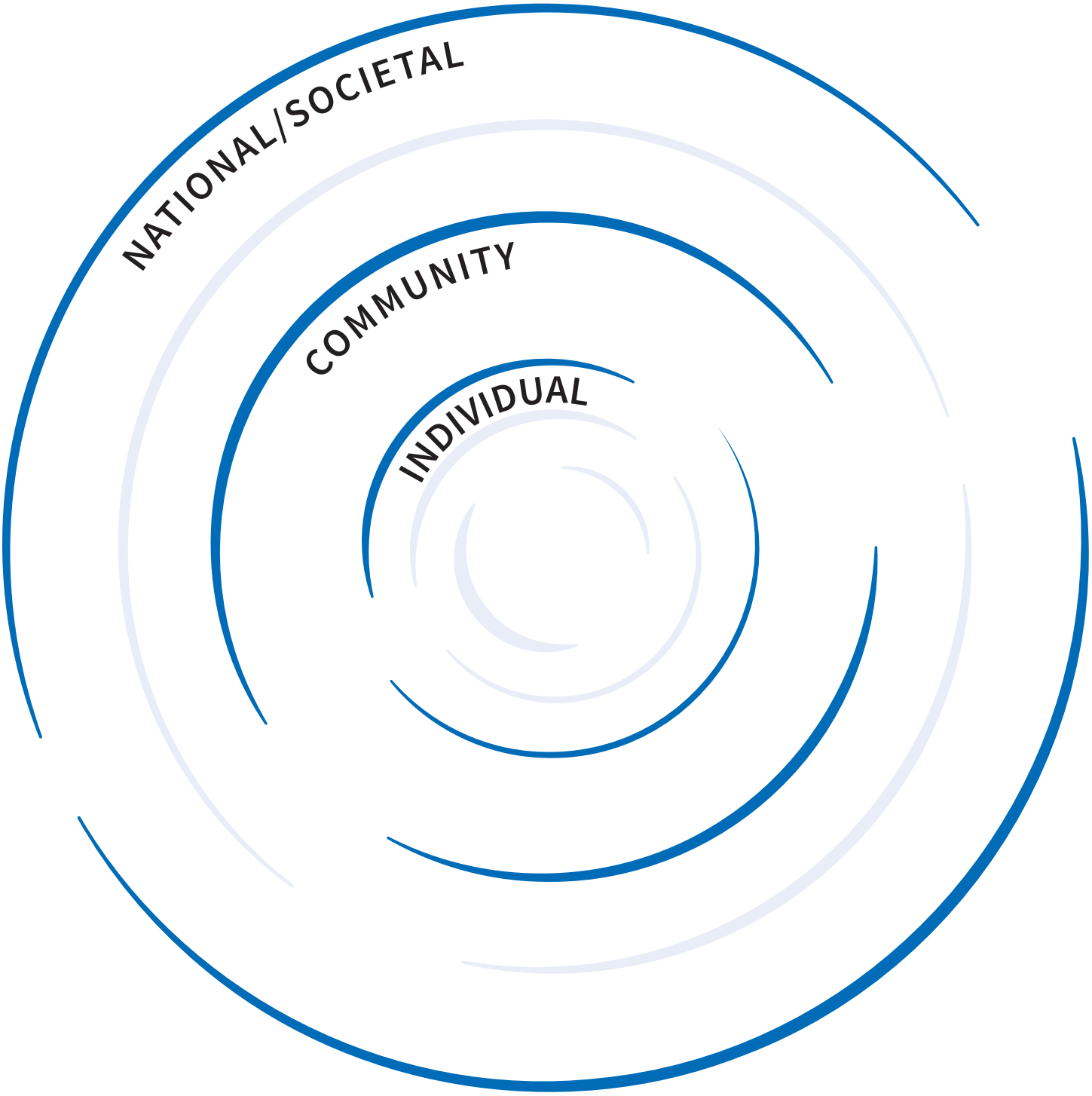
IʿTIKĀF: a ritual in which one secludes themselves from the world by staying in a masjid and engaging in worship for at least three consecutive days

7 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Al-Amālī*, P. 801, Ḥadīth #582.
8 Muḥaddith Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil*, Vol. 12, P. 412.

Activity 4.2d: A Ripple Effect of Social Benefits

1. Why is meeting the needs of fellow believers given such importance in Islam?

2. What are some of the benefits of giving in charity on an individual, community, and national/societal scale?



BRINGING BENEFIT AND HAPPINESS TO PEOPLE

Another important form of charity in Islam is to bring about benefit to people. This extends even to simply bringing happiness to them through a kind word or gesture.

Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ quotes the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as having said: "The creations are the dependents of Allah. The most beloved (of the servants of Allah) are those who bring the most benefit to them (other dependents), and who help them in their needs."[9]

REPELLING HARM FROM PEOPLE

Something as simple as removing harm or garbage from the path of people is considered a form of charity in Islam. Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī ﷺ quotes the Prophet ﷺ as having said: "Charity is obligatory upon all Muslims every day. When the Prophet ﷺ said this, he was asked: 'Who can afford to pay charity every single day?' He ﷺ responded: 'Even removing harm from the path of believers is charity.'"[10]

A more advanced form of this type of charity is to reach a level of expertise in a field of science or technology that removes major harm from people. This may include things like researching a particular disease and finding a cure or prevention for it; or studying natural phenomena such as fires or floods, and developing strategies for reducing the risk factors from these natural occurrences.

It has been narrated from Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ, from his father Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ that the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷺ said:

> "Whoever repels from the Muslim community a flood or a fire, Paradise becomes obligatory for them."[11]

Activity 4.2e: Benefits and Harms: Role-Playing

As was mentioned in this lesson, providing benefits to or removing harms from the paths of people is considered an important form of charity in Islam. Working with partners or in a group, come up with a scenario in which a benefit is provided to another person. Then, think of a scenario where an act of charity is performed by removing harm from the path of other people. Share your role-playing skits with the class.

9 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, P. 199.
10 *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, Vol. 7, P. 242.
11 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 5, P. 55.

CHAPTER 5

Practical Fiqh

5.1 Ḥijāb

5.2 Rules of Food and Drink

5.3 Music and Media

5.1 Ḥijāb

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify what *ḥijāb* is, and look at it in both physical and spiritual terms.
- Determine when *ḥijāb* is necessary and upon whom.
- Understand what it means, and how to apply the rules of looking at *maḥram* vs non-*maḥram.*

NOTE: This lesson should be taught in a gender-separated classroom by a teacher of the same gender.

Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qur'ān:

قُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ۝
وَقُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ...

Tell the believing men to cast down their looks and to guard their private parts. That is more decent (and purer) for them. Allah is indeed well aware of what they do. And tell the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their private parts; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; and that they should draw their veils over their chests and not display their beauty (adornments)… [1]

WHAT IS ḤIJĀB?

The word ***ḥijāb*** literally means "barrier." A barrier is something that covers and protects something or someone. While a physical barrier protects a woman's honor and covers her beauty, it is also a means for both men and women to shield themselves from this world's false beauty.

WHY IS ḤIJĀB NECESSARY?

As Muslims, our goal is to reach perfection by following the commands of Allah ﷻ, the All-Wise. The rules of Islam are set for us by Allah ﷻ so that we may achieve success in both this world and the Hereafter. One of these commands is to observe *ḥijāb*. Part of reaching our perfection lies in redirecting our lust *(shahwah)* toward that which Allah ﷻ has made permissible *(ḥalal)* for us, and staying away from that which He has made unlawful *(ḥarām)* for us.

The purpose of *ḥijāb* is to protect society from corruption, and also protect ourselves from misdirected desires. It offers a means for men and women to interact in a safe environment on the basis of respect. Questions often come up about the differences in dress code between that of men and women.

The important thing to realize is that *ḥijāb* in itself is much more than a scarf on the head, or even a dress code. It is a set of guidelines and principles for the safety and progression of communities as a whole, that can lead to the perfection of human beings. The above verses clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of both men and women in establishing and maintaining an upright, God-conscious society free from harms and evils against their own souls, as well as the souls of others.

STOP AND REFLECT: What does it mean to maintain a God-conscious society? What can you do personally to help this purpose in your daily life?

1 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah an-Nūr (24), Verses 30-31.

WHEN DOES ḤIJĀB APPLY?

Most Muslims become familiar with the concept of *ḥijāb* from a very early age. However, in a society where *ḥijāb* is not widespread, the guidelines can often become blurred. In this lesson, we will understand **when, how, and between whom** *ḥijāb* should be applied.

MAḤRAM AND NON-MAḤRAM

In Islam, people of the opposite gender are grouped into either our *maḥram* or non-*maḥram* counterparts. If two people of the opposite gender are *maḥram* to one another, then it means they do not need to observe *ḥijāb* around each other. This is because their close relationship will prevent them from falling into sin. The table outlines people who are *maḥram* and non-*maḥram* to each other.

We have to remember that although the people listed in the table are *maḥram* to a person, one's private parts must still be covered from them (the only exception is between a husband and a wife). Even in front of one's *maḥrams*, there is still a certain level of modesty that needs to be observed. This includes being dressed appropriately, the amount of touching that is allowed, and the conversations that take place between them.

If a person does not fall into any of the categories mentioned in the table, then they are non-*maḥram*, which means that special rules apply to looking, touching, and covering. Two non-*maḥram* people cannot touch one another at all, nor can they be alone with each other in a private place. A woman must also observe *ḥijāb* in front of any man who is non-*maḥram* to her. You may have noticed that cousins are **not** *maḥram* to each other, which means that once a girl reaches the age of *bulūgh*, she must observe the rules of *ḥijāb* with her cousins of the opposite gender. The same applies to anyone that has been adopted in the family. The spouses of our immediate aunts and uncles are also non-*maḥram* to us.

People who are Maḥram for WOMEN	People who are Maḥram for MEN
All women	All men
Father	Mother
Sons	Daughters
Husband	Wife/Wives
Maternal and Paternal Uncles	Maternal and Paternal Aunts
Nephews	Nieces
Stepfather	Stepmother
Stepsons (with certain conditions)	Stepdaughters (with certain conditions)
Grandfathers, great grandfathers, etc.	Grandmothers, great grandmothers, etc.
Grandsons, great grandsons, etc.	Granddaughters, great granddaughters, etc.
Husband's father, grandfathers, etc.	Wife's mother, grandmothers, etc.

Activity 5.1a: Scenarios

Hanna recently became *bālighah* and will now be observing *ḥijāb*. She still has some confusion about who is *maḥram* and non-*maḥram* to her. Can you help Hanna by answering her concerns?

1. My older sister recently got married. Do I need to observe *ḥijāb* when her husband is around? **YES** **NO**
2. My cousin and I have grown up together, and he is literally like my brother. He is now 16 years old. Is he *maḥram* to me? **YES** **NO**
3. Can I remove my *ḥijāb* in front of my stepfather? **YES** **NO**
4. My youngest uncle (dad's brother) has just turned 17. When he comes over, will I need to observe *ḥijāb*? **YES** **NO**

HIJĀB REQUIREMENTS FOR WOMEN

It is compulsory *(wājib)* for a woman to cover her entire body in front of non-*maḥram* men, except the face and hands up to the wrist. Additionally, the following guidelines must be observed:

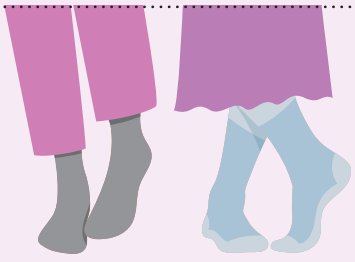
Her clothes should be loose-fitting, and cover the shape and contours of her body.

All of the hair, the neck, and ears must be fully covered.

The arms should be covered up to the wrists, so some ladies wear separate sleeve extensions to make sure the obligatory parts are properly covered.

Feet must be covered.

- See-through socks are not permissible.
- If no non-*maḥram* men are present during *ṣalāh*, the feet do not have to be covered, nor do the clothes need to be loose-fitting. For example, pajamas or leggings can be worn as long as they cover the skin. But please be advised that the arms up to the wrists, and the feet up to the ankles must be covered in *ṣalāh.*



Adornment (Zīnah)

Ḥijāb is more than just a scarf on the head and wearing loose clothing. Women also have to refrain from wearing things that are attractive while in front of non-*maḥrams*. Adornments—which are referred to in Arabic as ***zīnah***—are things that beautify you. For example, a sparkling, gold necklace is meant to beautify and bring attention to you, which is why it would be considered as *zīnah*. While it is permissible to wear such things when no non-*maḥrams* are around, it is *ḥarām* to display them in front of non-*maḥram* men, as doing so contradicts the principle of modest dress. The general principles to remember are that: (a) one's clothes, make-up, and accessories that are displayed to a non-*maḥram* should not be considered as *zīnah;* and (b) one's clothing and accessories should not be a source of attraction for non-*maḥrams.*

Sometimes a woman might not be sure as to whether a particular clothing or accessory is considered as *zīnah* or not. Technically, in this situation, it is permissible for her to wear it, but she must be honest with herself and keep in mind the need to dress modestly. She can always consult those who have a better understanding of how the clothing or accessory would normally be perceived to arrive at a better understanding.

Examples of things that are normally considered to be *zīnah* can include: makeup, nail polish, nose rings, henna (mehndi), necklaces, perfume, and colored contact lenses.

STOP AND REFLECT: The above paragraph mentions being honest with ourselves. What might an honest conversation with yourself look like when considering if a certain accessory is normally considered a *zīnah* or not? What might be things to remember when reminding yourself why something is considered a *zīnah*?

Rules of Looking

In Islam, it is forbidden to look at anyone, other than one's spouse, with a lustful intention. Lust means inappropriate attraction. This applies to both men and women. The Noble Qurʾān specifically covers this issue for both men and women in the verses mentioned at the beginning of this lesson.

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said:

An evil glance is one of the poisonous arrows of Shayṭān. How many of these glances become a cause of prolonged grief! [2]

It is important to remember that looking at someone who is dressed decently and without any lustful intention is not *ḥarām*. However, looking lustfully is a sin and can lead to many harmful effects. Therefore, when we are in an environment where there are members of the opposite gender, we should be very careful about our looks, avoid staring, and make sure that we are not looking at others with a lustful or bad intention.

2 Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, *Wasāʾil Ash-Shīʿah,* Vol. 20, P. 190.

Activity 5.1b: Reflection

THINK: Think about what modesty means in Islam based on this lesson. At what level does the society we live in share this mentality, if any? What kind of issues do you think this can create for someone who is in middle school, or high school?

PAIR: Compare and discuss your answers with a partner.

SHARE: As a class, come up with a solution to one of the problems, using the verse mentioned above as a guide. Questions to consider: What can we do to make it easier to follow the Islamic laws? How can we help each other stay on the right path?

Activity 5.1c: Creating a Skit

For your assigned scenario (from the scenarios below), you may use the space provided to help brainstorm your skit. Remember to be respectful while presenting to classmates. Each group member must have a role to play. Use the rubric at the end to guide your work.

SCENARIO 1: Your non-Muslim friend approaches you to ask you about *ḥijāb* in Islam. Create a dialogue explaining its purpose, and when/where it applies in your daily life.

Things to include in your dialogue:

- Whether *ḥijāb* is necessary for both men or women.
- If so, how is the *ḥijāb* requirement similar and different for both?

SCENARIO 2: Your younger sibling approaches you asking about *ḥijāb* and why it is only for women. How do you respond? Create a dialogue you might have with your sibling to help clarify this misunderstanding.

GRADING RUBRIC

	1 Ineffective	2 Somewhat Effective	3 Considerably Effective	4 Highly Effective
Body Language/ Etiquette	Struggled to maintain respectful language during the dialogue/skit	Language used was somewhat respectful, but there was room for improvement.	Language used was respectful, but body language could have been improved.	Maintained respectful language and body language during the entire dialogue/skit.
Grammar	There are 5 or more grammatical mistakes.	There are 3-5 grammatical mistakes.	There are 1-2 grammatical mistakes.	There are no grammatical mistakes at all.
Islamic Principles / Accuracy	Content does not meet Islamic principles mentioned in this lesson.	Content meets Islamic principles, however there is a lack of accuracy in item description.	Content presented meets almost all of the Islamic principles mentioned above, while maintaining somewhat accuracy of item description.	Content presented suits all Islamic principles mentioned above, while maintaining accuracy of item description.
Creativity	Skit lacked organization and/or cohesiveness.	Skit was presented somewhat creatively, but left the audience wanting more.	Skit was presented in an engaging manner, but lacked cohesiveness.	Skit was presented in an engaging and catchy way in terms of content and cohesiveness.
Quality	Content presented was not convincing or compelling.	Content presented did not serve the intended purpose, and lacked quality.	Content presented did not serve the intended purpose, but still demonstrated quality work.	Content presented was extremely compelling and convincing.

Activity 5.1d: Review Questions

TRUE OR FALSE

1. _____ For girls who have become *bāligha*, cousins are *maḥram*.

2. _____ Even if someone is *maḥram* to us, we must still try to always dress decently in front of them.

3. _____ *Ḥijāb* is both a physical and spiritual barrier to shield us from unlawful worldly desires.

4. _____ *Zīnah*, or things that beautify you, are always permissible.

5. _____ Physical *ḥijāb* is only for women.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

6. *Ḥijāb* literally means:
   - **a.** a head covering
   - **b.** a barrier
   - **c.** an adornment

7. For a girl, *ḥijāb* is *wājib* in front of her:
   - **a.** nephews
   - **b.** male cousins who are *bāligh*
   - **c.** paternal uncle
   - **d.** none of the above

8. *Zīnah* (adornment) is anything that:
   - **a.** makes your appearance more modest
   - **b.** beautifies you
   - **c.** both of the above

9. The purpose of *ḥijāb* is to:
   - **a.** protect society from corruption
   - **b.** protect individuals from misled desires
   - **c.** like a flag or symbol to identify Muslim women, and give them respect
   - **d.** all of the above

10. If two people are *maḥram* to each other, then:
    - **a.** they do not need to observe *ḥijāb*
    - **b.** must still dress decently in one another's presence
    - **c.** they must observe full *ḥijāb* in front of each other
    - **d.** a & b

Activity 5.1e: Ḥadīth Review

Explain what the *ḥadīth* below means, and how it applies to our daily lives.

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said:

"An evil glance is one of the poisonous arrows of Shayṭān. How many of these glances become a cause of prolonged grief!"

5.2 Rules of Food and Drink

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Learn the rules of eating and drinking in Islam.
- Explore how animals are slaughtered humanely according to Islamic guidelines.
- Discuss some Islamic etiquettes of eating.

ḤALĀL

Some animals whose meat is permissible *(ḥalāl)* to consume:

- Cow
- Goat
- Sheep/ Lamb
- Camel
- Chicken
- Emu
- Turkey
- Deer
- Gazelle
- Zebra

MAKRŪH

Land animals that are reprehensible *(makrūh)* to eat:

- Horse
- Mule
- Donkey

ḤARĀM

Some animals whose meat is forbidden *(ḥarām)* to eat:

- Pig
- Dog
- Cat
- Snakes*
- Elephant
- Monkey
- Kangaroo
- Rabbit

Allah ﷻ, the All-Merciful, has made the natural world—including animals, fruits, and vegetables—subservient to us in order to make our lives enjoyable and comfortable while we are on this Earth. One of the greatest blessings that He has given us are the incredible variety of foods which are available to us. However, He has also laid down certain rules and laws when it comes to what we can consume, because He knows what is best for us. Not everything that exists in nature is meant to be consumed by human beings. A small portion of these things are harmful to us—either spiritually or physically—so we must avoid them. In this lesson, we will learn some of the rules pertaining to what we are allowed to eat and drink, and what we must avoid.

RULES OF FOOD AND DRINK

Foods and drinks that are permissible and lawful for us to eat are called ***ḥalāl***. On the other hand, foods and drinks that are not permissible and unlawful for us to eat are *ḥarām* and must be avoided. It is a sin to consume those items which are not allowed.

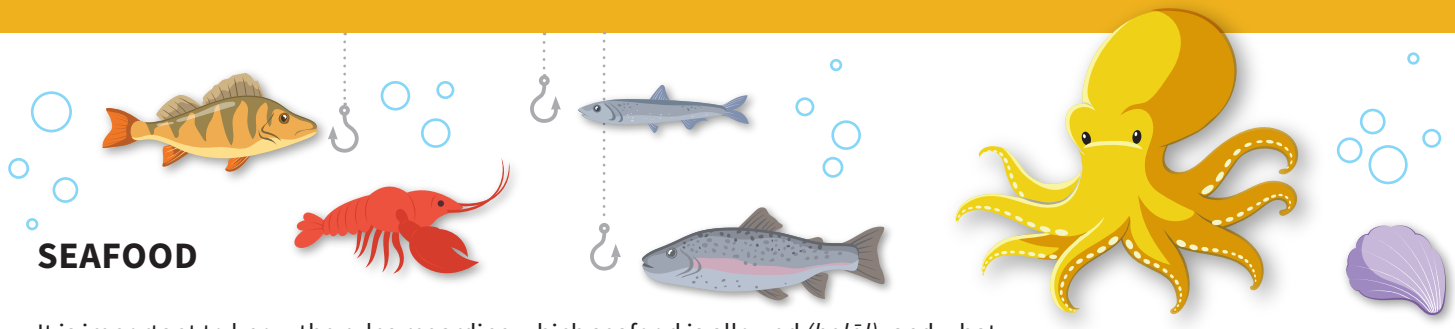
MEAT

We are allowed to eat products from many different animals, as long as they are slaughtered in an Islamic manner. We will discuss the rules about Islamic slaughtering later on in this lesson.

Wild animals whose blood gushes out when slaughtered are *ḥalāl* to eat if they are hunted and slaughtered properly (e.g. deer, gazelle, and wild goat). One of the conditions is that when the animal is hunted down, it has the ability to flee. Therefore, wild baby deer (or similar baby animals) who have not developed enough to be able to run away when hunted are *ḥarām* to eat if they are killed through hunting. Their skin is not permissible to use either. Domesticated land animals, as long as they are slaughtered in the prescribed Islamic way, are allowed to be eaten even if they are young.

Animals whose blood does not gush out when slaughtered are *ḥarām* to eat. However, as with other animals like rabbits, their skin is *ṭāhir* if they are hunted or slaughtered in the correct Islamic way.

*Snakes, and other animals whose blood does not gush out when slaughtered. However, as with other animals like rabbits, their skin is *ṭāhir* if they are hunted or slaughtered in the correct Islamic way.



SEAFOOD

It is important to know the rules regarding which seafood is allowed *(ḥalāl)*, and what kind of seafood is not allowed if one goes fishing, or wants to buy some fish from the grocery store. Imām Al-Bāqir ﷺ said:

> "Eat any fish that has scales, but do not eat those which do not have scales." [1]

There are two types of ḥalāl seafood:

1. Any fish that has scales, and their eggs (often found in sushi). When in doubt whether a fish has scales or not, or if fish by-products are from fish which have scales or not, you have to investigate to make sure that it is actually *ḥalāl* to eat.
2. Shrimp and prawn.

The seafood must die after being caught, either in the net or after coming out of the water. Fish that die in the sea that were not caught before dying are not permissible to eat.

The eggs of *ḥalāl* fish are *ḥalāl* to eat, and the eggs of *ḥarām* fish are *ḥarām* to eat.

ḤARĀM

Some of the common impermissible *(ḥarām)* sea creatures include:

- Shark
- Crab
- Lobster
- Calamari/squid
- Octopus
- Swordfish
- Oyster
- Catfish
- Seawater eels
- Basa fish

These marine animals are ḥarām to eat, but they are ṭāhir.

BIRDS AND OTHER FLYING CREATURES

ḤALĀL

The following birds are *ḥalāl* to eat (this includes chickens and ducks):

- Birds that flap their wings more than glide.
- Birds that do not have talons.

ḤARĀM

Baby wild birds are *ḥarām* to hunt. All of their body parts are *ḥarām* to eat if they are hunted and killed, and these parts become *najis*.

The following birds are *ḥarām* to eat:

- Birds that glide more than they flap.
- Birds that have talons.

If such birds are hunted in the correct way, their meat is not *ḥalāl* to eat, but their parts are *ṭāhir*.

COMMON ḤALĀL & ḤARĀM SEAFOOD (refer to this list):

https://www.al-islam.org/fasting-and-ramadhan-sheikh-mansour-leghaei/common-ḥalāl-and-non-ḥalāl-sea-foods

STOP AND REFLECT: Were you surprised at any of the categorizations above? Are there animals in the *ḥalāl* section that you have never eaten before?

1 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, V. 6, P. 219.

Activity 5.2a: Research

Choose one or two animals that are *ḥarām* to eat, and research why they might be categorized as *ḥarām*.

1. How do they live?

2. What do they eat?

3. Why might they be harmful for us to ingest?

RULES OF ISLAMIC SLAUGHTERING

Islam has outlined specific rules for how an animal should be slaughtered in order for its meat to be *ḥalāl*. The method of *ḥalāl* slaughter is more merciful to the animal because it leads to a quicker and less painful death. It is also healthier because it allows more of the blood within the animal's body to come out when it is slaughtered, thereby reducing the amount of leftover blood, which is harmful for human beings.

CONDITIONS OF SLAUGHTER

The following conditions must be in place when slaughtering an animal:

- The slaughterer must be a Muslim (male or female).
- The knife used to slaughter the animal must be made of iron if available, according to certain *marājiʿ*.
- The throat, chest, and stomach of the animal must be facing the *qiblah*.
- The slaughterer must mention a remembrance containing the name of Allah ﷻ, such as *"Bismillāh"* or *"Allāhu Akbar"* before slaughtering the animal. The person doing the slaughtering must mention the name of Allah ﷻ themselves.
- The four structures in the throat must be cut: the esophagus, the trachea, and the two major blood vessels. Therefore, the cut must be made under the "Adam's apple." The whole head should not be cut off completely until the animal is fully dead.
- After the animal is slaughtered, it should still have some motion (e.g., flap/blink). This helps the blood circulate out of the body, but is not painful to the animal.
- A normal amount of blood should come out of the animal's body after it is slaughtered.

  In some countries, stunning the animals with an electric shock before slaughtering them is common. As long as the animal does not die due to this stunning, this is permissible. If the animal dies before being slaughtered due to this stunning, then it will not be permissible to eat it.

EATING OUT

At home, our parents usually cook, and they are careful to buy *ḥalāl* meat from the butcher, so usually we do not have to worry about anything. However, when we are eating out somewhere, we must make sure that the meat we are eating is *ḥalāl*.

- If the food we are eating does not contain obvious meat products, we can assume it is *ḥalāl* and do not need to investigate further.
- If what we are eating does contain any meat products, then we must reach reasonable certainty that the meat is *ḥalāl*. We may reach this reasonable certainty in one of the following ways:
  - ▷ The owner of the restaurant is a Muslim who says that the meat is *ḥalāl* and whom we don't suspect to be lying
  - ▷ The shop has *ḥalāl* certification from a trustworthy Muslim organization.

Activity 5.2b: Ḥalāl Confirmation

Choose your favorite *ḥalāl* restaurant and do a *ḥalāl* confirmation for them! Either identify the owner of the restaurant and verify that their meat is *ḥalāl*, or find their *ḥalāl* certification.

NAJIS FOOD AND DRINK

In addition to the above rules, we must also remember that it is *ḥarām* to eat anything that has become *najis*. Sometimes, a type of food is *ḥalāl* to eat in itself, but becomes *najis* due to external reasons and therefore becomes impermissible to eat. Here are some situations where food may become *najis*:

Pig Products

Eating pork, ham, or other pig products (pork gelatin, bacon, lard, etc.) is of course *ḥarām*. However, some places that sell *ḥalāl* food also sell pork products. Since pork is *najis*, food cooked using the same pots, pans, or utensils as those used for pork or ham also becomes *najis*. If we are in doubt about whether there has been contact with pork or not, the rule is that we can assume there has not been any contact. However, it may be better to take precaution, and not eat at places that also have pig products.

Gelatin

Some of the common processed foods may contain gelatin. Gelatin may be derived from *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām* sources. If we do not know the source, then it is permissible to eat the product without having to investigate. However, it is much safer to investigate and find out from the company that manufactures the product what the source of the gelatin is. This is especially important as in the past most of the gelatin was derived from pigs.

Non-ḥalāl meat

If we are purchasing food from a restaurant that has both *ḥalāl* and non-*ḥalāl* meat, we must be careful regarding the *ḥalāl* food becoming *najis*. Meat that is not *ḥalāl* (from an animal which is not slaughtered Islamically) is *najis* (except seafood, which is *ṭāhir* even if it is not *ḥalāl*). So, if *ḥarām* meat is prepared or cooked on the same surfaces that *ḥalāl* meat is prepared, then the food could become *najis*, making it *ḥarām* to eat. Again, if we are not sure if the food we are buying has become *najis*, we can still eat it, but it is always best to take precaution.

Disbelievers

Food becomes *najis** if a *kāfir (non-ahlul kitāb kāfir)* touches the food while their hand is wet, or if the food itself is a liquid or liquid-like and they make skin contact with it. If we are not sure whether the food has been touched by such a person with their bare hands or not, then we can assume it is pure and okay to eat.

*Āyatullāh Sīstānī: according to obligatory precaution—*iḥtiyāṭ wājib*

Alcohol

As we know, beer and wine are *ḥarām* and also *najis*. If food comes into contact with beer or wine, then it becomes *najis* and is impermissible to eat.

- A common example of this is "beer batter" which is sometimes used to coat food like fish filets. Since this fish has come into contact with beer, it is not permissible to eat.
- Another common issue related to this is vanilla extract, or other substances that contain ethanol or ethyl alcohol.
  - ▷ According to Āyatullāh Sīstānī, vanilla extract is not permissible to consume on its own because it has a high concentration of ethanol and is intoxicating. However, it is not *najis*. When a trace amount of vanilla extract (like a teaspoon) is added to a dish (like cake batter), the resulting food is still *ḥalāl* because the total quantity of ethanol in the food is less than 2% and it will eventually disappear.
  - ▷ According to Āyatullāh Khamenei, ethanol is not *najis* unless one is certain that this type of alcohol was originally intoxicating and in liquid form. Since ethanol is a gas in its original form and is poisonous (but not intoxicating) when it first takes a liquid form, it is not *najis*. Therefore, just like with Āyatullāh Sīstānī, vanilla extract is permissible to consume if added in a small amount into a larger dish.
  - ▷ Vanilla essence, vanillin, and vanilla flavoring are sometimes used as alternatives to vanilla extract. Some versions of these may contain alcohol. If the quantity of this alcohol is more than a trace amount, then the same ruling would apply as above.

STOP AND REFLECT: Are there any restaurants that you enjoy eating at which may be exposed to any of the *najāsat (najis* things) above?

STOP AND REFLECT: There are multiple portions in the section above that say it is better to take "precaution" when faced with the issue of our food being contaminated with *najis* items. What does this mean?

Activity 5.2c: Explain it!

Your new Muslim friend is concerned about the concept of *najāsah* in food. Explain in a simplistic way how *najāsah* is transferred, and what to do if this occurs. Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

ETIQUETTES OF EATING AND DRINKING

The following is a list of some ***mustaḥab*** (recommended) and ***makrūh*** (disliked) actions when eating.

MUSTAḤAB

Mustaḥab/encouraged acts:

- Washing hands before eating.
- Saying *"Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm"* before you begin to eat.
- Saying *"Alḥamdulillāh"* after you finish eating.
- Eating slowly.
- Eating with others, especially family members.
- Cleaning your teeth especially in between the teeth after eating.
- Starting and ending the meal with some salt.

MAKRŪH

Makrūh/discouraged acts:

- Eating raw or uncooked meat.
- Overeating.
- Leaning against something while eating.
- Eating food while it is very hot, or blowing on food.
- Putting bread under the plate.
- Peeling fruit that can be eaten with the peel.
- Eating while walking.
- Eating alone.
- Eating in a separate place than subordinates.

Activity 5.2d: Skits

In groups of three you will prepare a skit to share with the class. The teacher will assign each group two *mustaḥab* acts to portray, and two *makrūh* acts to correct. Your skit should include the acts that you were assigned in a subtle way. As you are watching each other's skits, try to identify which *mustaḥab* and *makrūh* acts the group was assigned! Use the rubric on the following page to guide your skit creation.

GRADING RUBRIC

	1 **Ineffective**	2 **Somewhat Effective**	3 **Considerably Effective**	4 **Highly Effective**
Body Language/ Etiquette	Struggled to maintain respectful language during the dialogue/ skit.	Language used was somewhat respectful, but left room for improvement.	Language used was respectful, but body language could have been improved.	Maintained respectful language and body language during the dialogue/skit.
Grammar	There are 5 or more grammatical mistakes.	There are 3-5 grammatical mistakes.	There are 1-2 grammatical mistakes.	There are no grammatical mistakes in the poster/script.
Islamic Principles / Accuracy	Content does not meet Islamic principles mentioned in the lesson.	Content meets Islamic principles however, there is a lack of accuracy in item description.	Content presented meets almost all of the Islamic principles mentioned above while maintaining accuracy of item description.	Content presented suits all of the Islamic principles mentioned above while maintaining accuracy of item description.
Creativity	Skit lacked organization and cohesiveness.	Skit was presented somewhat creatively, but left the audience wanting more.	Skit was presented in an engaging manner, but lacked cohesiveness.	Skit was presented in an engaging and catchy way in terms of content and cohesiveness.
Quality	Content presented is not convincing or compelling.	Content presented does not serve the intended purpose and lacks quality.	Content presented does not serve the intended purpose, but still demonstrates quality work.	Content presented is extremely compelling and convincing.

Activity 5.2e: Review Questions

1. I bought a new brand of ice cream from the cornershop. On my way home, I read the ingredients and realized that there is a very tiny amount of wine in the ice cream. What should I do?
   a. I can eat it because the amount of wine is very small.
   b. I can eat it because the wine in it will not make me drunk.
   c. I cannot eat it because it is *najis* and *ḥarām*.

2. I go to a restaurant that serves both *ḥalāl* and non-*ḥalāl* meat:
   a. I can eat the *ḥalāl* meat.
   b. I cannot even eat the *ḥalāl* meat there.
   c. I can eat the *ḥalāl* meat as long as I am sure that it is *ḥalāl,* and I have not seen it come into contact with the non-*ḥalāl* meat.

3. Any product made from pig:
   a. Is *ḥarām,* but not *najis*.
   b. Is not *ḥarām,* nor *najis.*
   c. Is both *ḥarām* and *najis*.

4. Which is true?
   a. All seafood is *ḥalāl.*
   b. No seafood is *ḥalāl*.
   c. Certain types of seafood are *ḥalāl*.

5. I go to a shop where the owner/worker is a Muslim. He claims that the meat he sells is *ḥalāl* and I do not have any reason to suspect that he is lying. In that case:
   a. I do not need to investigate any further, and I can buy from them.
   b. I need to investigate further before I buy from them.
   c. Neither of the above.

6. **True or False:** A woman cannot slaughter an animal. _____

7. When slaughtering an animal their _____, _____, and _____ must be facing the *qiblah*.

8. Why must the animal still have some motion after being slaughtered?

9. What are three different things the slaughterer can recite right before slaughtering the animal?

BONUS ACTIVITY: *Ḥalāl* food is delicious food! Bring the recipe of your favorite meal (one you love to cook or love to eat, or both) and share it with the class!

5.3 Music and Media

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Reflect on time as the greatest asset that Allah ﷻ has given us in this world, and the choices we can make to use this time to improve ourselves, reach perfection, and move closer to Him.
- Explore music and songs, gaming, movies, and TV shows, as well as digital media as forms of entertainment that are often misused, and can have many negative spiritual and physical effects.
- Outline the features that make certain types of music *ḥarām,* and discuss how these guidelines can help us determine what is *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* in terms of weddings, as well as music and dance classes.
- Discuss guidelines on what *ḥarām* elements to avoid in video games, TV shows, and digital media.

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

The feet of a servant of Allah will not move even a step on the Day of Judgment until they are asked about four things: about their life—how did they spend it; about their youth—how did they spend it; about what they earned—from where they acquired it, and on what they spent it; and about our love, the Ahlul Bayt.[1]

In the past, we have talked about our purpose in life: to get closer to Allah ﷻ, which in Arabic is known as *qurb ilāhi*. A major aspect of reaching this purpose is how we use our time. Time is the greatest asset that Allah ﷻ has given us in this world in order to improve ourselves, reach perfection, and move closer to Him.

The Ahlul Bayt ﷺ have taught us that our time should be split into three components. Imām ʿAlī ﷺ said: "For a believer, there are three portions of time: a portion in which they converse with their Lord; a portion in which they seek their livelihood; and a portion dedicated to their *ḥalāl* pleasures that will help them improve."[2]

STOP AND REFLECT:

Part A: What does this *ḥadīth* tell us about how we should spend our time? Do you think you divide your time among these three things?

Part B: Why does the Imām ﷺ mention pleasure or entertainment as one of the portions of time? Is this something necessary? What are some examples of ḥalāl entertainment or pleasure that one can engage in?

ENTERTAINMENT: RULES AND GUIDELINES

As we can see from the above *ḥadīth*, entertainment is an important part of life. We all need some time to rest and recuperate so that we can continue engaging in other important activities, such as worship and earning a livelihood. Many types of entertainment are permissible in Islam. Activities such as playing sports (with some conditions), being in nature, socializing with family and friends, and travelling are all permissible in and of themselves.

However, there are some forms of entertainment about which we need to be extra careful. This is because in today's world, these forms of entertainment are being misused and can have many negative spiritual and physical effects on us. These include: music and songs, gaming, movies, and TV shows, as well as digital media use. In this lesson, we will look at some of the guidelines and rules that Islam sets for us in these regards. The rules are in place to protect us from the many possible harmful effects of different types of entertainment.

1 Shaykh Ṭabarsī, *Ghurar Al-Akhbār*, Ḥadīth #923.
2 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Ḥadīth #378.

MUSIC, SONGS, AND DANCING

There are a lot of questions surrounding music, and which forms of music are permissible, and which kinds are impermissible *(ḥarām)*. Listening to forbidden music is a definite sin in Islam. Perhaps some of the wisdom behind Allah ﷻ commands us to do and forbids us from is to ensure that we live our lives in a way that we are able to reach our true potential, and He seeks to assist human beings through teaching them what is good and bad for them in every aspect of their life! Later in this lesson, we will look at the rules we can apply to determine which music is *ḥarām*. For now, we will briefly look at some of the reasons why music is *ḥarām* in Islam.

SOME REASONS WHY CERTAIN MUSIC IS ḤARĀM

1. *Ḥarām* songs and singing can cause inappropriate desires to enter a person's heart, and this can lead to other sins. Both the singer and the one who listens attentively to it become negligent toward Allah ﷻ, and are more inclined to engage in immoral deeds.
2. Music can distract us from the reality of our lives, and take us away from our responsibilities. Eventually our hearts become hardened, making it difficult for us to pay attention in our prayers, or enjoy the spirituality of supplications.
3. *Ḥarām* music almost always comes along with promoting a *ḥarām* lifestyle.

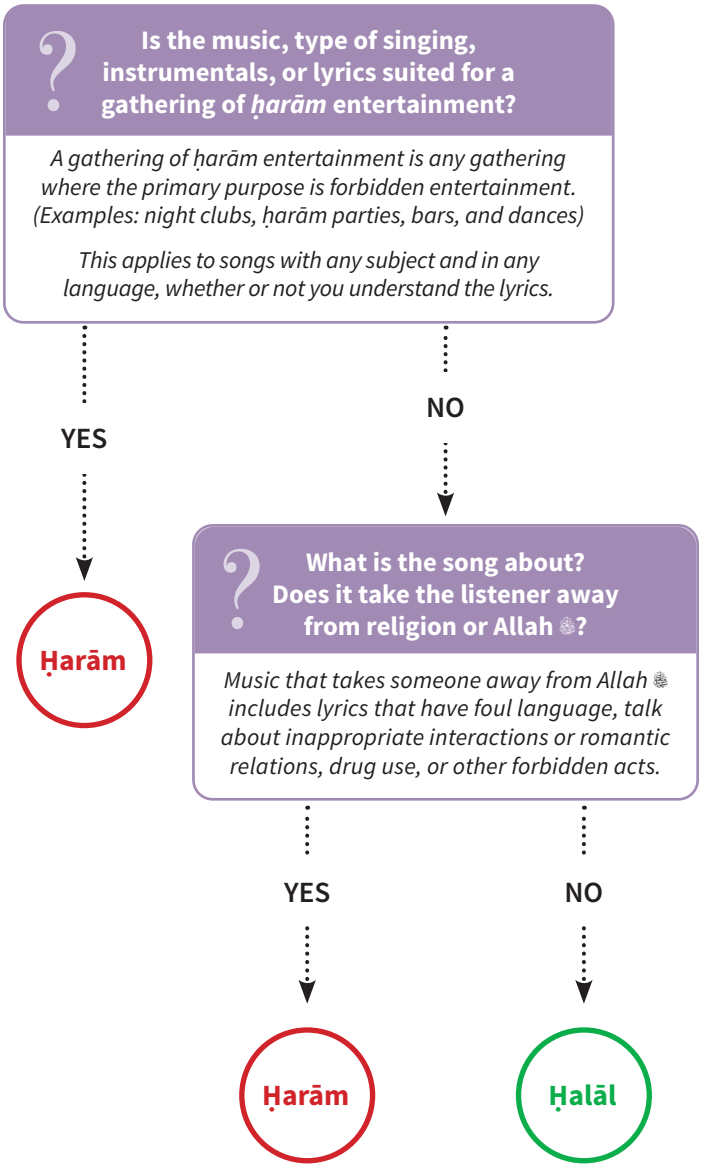
Although we have listed some reasons why certain music is *ḥarām*, we will never know the complete wisdom behind most of Allah's rulings. However, we still have to follow the rulings, since we know that Allah ﷻ is the All-Knowledgeable, All-Powerful, All-Loving, and All-Wise; and therefore, His rulings are for our own good, and in our best interest. For example, we do not know why *Fajr* is two *rakaʿāt* instead of three or four; or why *Ẓuhr* and *ʿAṣr* are four *rakaʿāt*. If one day we wanted to pray three *rakaʿāt* for *Fajr* because we have the energy to, this would invalidate our prayer. In the same way, we cannot use the excuse that we think or feel that *ḥarām* music does not affect us, so we will listen to it if we want to. Allah ﷻ has made different rulings for a reason, and there is wisdom behind all of His commandments.

Sometimes, rulings are black and white: for example, *Maghrib* is three *rakaʿāt*, eating pork is *ḥarām*, lying and stealing are sins, etc. For other rulings however, Islam has given certain boundaries, and the application of these rulings is our responsibility.

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some obvious ways in which *ḥarām* music might affect us without our realizing it?

WHAT MAKES MUSIC AND SONGS ḤARĀM?

The below guidelines can be followed in order to determine if a song is *ḥarām*:


Is the music, type of singing, instrumentals, or lyrics suited for a gathering of ḥarām entertainment?
A gathering of ḥarām entertainment is any gathering where the primary purpose is forbidden entertainment. (Examples: night clubs, ḥarām parties, bars, and dances)
This applies to songs with any subject and in any language, whether or not you understand the lyrics.
YES
NO
Ḥarām
What is the song about? Does it take the listener away from religion or Allah ﷻ?
Music that takes someone away from Allah ﷻ includes lyrics that have foul language, talk about inappropriate interactions or romantic relations, drug use, or other forbidden acts.
YES
NO
Ḥarām
Ḥalāl

Activity 5.3a: What Differentiates Ḥarām Music from Ḥalāl Music?

Complete the compare and contrast Venn diagram below with the distinct features of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* music, and then provide the features by contrast, that would make some music *ḥalāl*. Are there any overlaps in their features?

WHAT IF I CANNOT TELL IF A SONG IS ḤARĀM OR NOT?

We are responsible for learning all of the rules which apply to our lives, and *ḥarām* music is included in this list. It is *wājib* upon us to learn the rules related to music so we can differentiate which kind of music is permitted to listen to, and which type we must avoid. If we sincerely do our responsibility of finding out the rulings, but we still *honestly* cannot tell whether a certain song or type of music is *ḥarām* or *ḥalāl*, then we can listen to it.

Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said:

> "A house in which there is ghinā (*ḥarām* music) is not safe from calamities; supplications in that house are not answered; and no angels enter such a house."[3]

GATHERINGS WITH MUSIC

Listening to *ḥarām* music during any gathering is *ḥarām*. This prohibition applies to weddings as well. If you are at a wedding and *ḥarām* music starts playing, someone should try and advise the host to change the music to something permissible, if one can. If that is not possible, then one should just leave the gathering.

What about places where music is playing in the background and you have no control over it, for example, at the mall? If you are **not actively listening** to the music or song, then you have not committed a sin.

DANCING

Dancing is generally not allowed in Islam, and most forms of it—such as the type of dancing that takes place in *ḥarām* gatherings of entertainment—are prohibited. Also, if it occurs in a mixed gathering of males and females, then it is definitely forbidden.

MUSIC AND DANCE CLASSES AT SCHOOL

In some schools, it is part of the curriculum to learn music and dancing. It is important to remember the following points in this regard:

- If the musical instrument is one which is not primarily used for sinful gatherings, then learning that instrument is permissible.
- If the type of singing is one that is not primarily for sinful gatherings, then it is permissible to take part in that class.
- However, if the type of music or the singing is one that is primarily or usually used in sinful gatherings, then it is not permissible to take part in those classes.
- It is generally not permissible to take part in dance classes.
- Most schools will allow students to be exempted from such classes if they go against one's religion or beliefs.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Think... What are some polite ways that you can remove yourself from situations where you might be actively exposed to *ḥarām* music?

Pair... Come up with three scenarios where you may be placed in a difficult position of having to leave a place where *ḥarām* music is being played. Then, practice freeing yourself from those scenarios with a partner.

Share! Be ready to share with the class!

3 *Daʿāʾim Al-Islām*, Vol. 2, P. 28.

VIDEO GAMES

Video games are a common form of entertainment nowadays. Playing video games in and of itself is permissible, and can be a good way of bonding with friends, improving hand-eye coordination, and engaging in *ḥalāl* entertainment.

As with all things though, it needs to be done in moderation. Playing video games excessively can have harmful effects on our lives. Firstly, it can cause us to neglect our important duties in relation to Allah ﷻ, our families, our studies, and our religion overall. The hours spent playing video games may mean that we are not helping our parents with chores, doing our homework or assignments, or offering our *ṣalāh* on time. This is the first sign that we should cut back on the time we are spending playing video games.

Certain video games can have severe impacts on our health. With the new advancements of technology, people are spending more and more time in front of screens. Whether it is our smartphones, TVs, playstations or other gaming devices, the effect on our mental and physical health is the same. We do not realize how much time we are actually sitting in front of a screen which leaves us disconnected with nature, and even with our family and friends. The impact on our physical health is now beginning to show itself. As many children and adults are leaving sports and physical activities to replace it with gaming and screen time, the effects according to The National Library of Medicine are detrimental. A 2010 study showed a significant correlation between gaming and depression, anxiety, sleep issues, as well as physical illness.[4]

Just like any screen time, consistent gaming can lead to a wide range of mental, physical, and spiritual defects. It is best to be able to control the amount of time you spend gaming, and if you cannot control it, then it is best to stay away from it as it has the potential to cause many issues within our lives.

Gaming can also become an addiction which could be very dangerous.

There are certain signs that a person may be addicted to gaming, some of which include:

- Losing control over gaming.
- Feeling guilty about gaming, but still engaging in gaming for extended periods of time.
- Prioritizing gaming to the extent that it takes precedence over other interests and activities.
- Continuing to game despite its negative effects on their studies, family relationships, or social life.

If a person feels that they may be suffering from addiction to gaming, they should seek help from their parents, or other trusted support people. It is also important to remember the following points regarding gaming:

- Games that include inappropriate or arousing visual scenes are not permissible to play. If playing a game leads to indecent thoughts, then playing that game is not permissible, even if the scenes are animated.
- Games that revolve around *ḥarām* themes, such as excessive violence, drug use, and inappropriate relations are not allowed.
- Many games contain *ḥarām* music. Listening to this music is not permissible.
- Gaming typically comes along with a social component, where groups of gamers will play together. It is extremely important to remember that many times we do not know the person who is on the other end of the game. We need to keep ourselves and our families safe. If we do know the others whom we are playing with, we need to be cautious of using harmful or aggressive language, bullying, and staying away from other harmful effects of gaming with a social media component. Also, we should not follow high profile gamers on social media as they often have inappropriate themes and language.
- Gaming is not recommended in the sense that it plays no logical or actual purpose for human beings in comparison to sports which actually aid in keeping the body healthy. Gaming is often associated with issues like excessive aggression, poor sleep hygiene, obesity, or even heart problems. If a person is playing games, then it should be a source of relaxation—something used for resting, in good balance, and proper moderation. Not using it wisely can make it a form of *lahw*[5] or heedlessness.

4 Zamani, E., M. Chashmi, and N.Hedayati, (2009). *Effect of addiction to computer games on physical and mental health of female and male students of Guidance School in the city of Isfahan*. Addiction and Health. Retrieved June 11, 2022 from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3905489/

5 *Lahw* is any music or singing which due to its characteristics keeps human beings away from Allah ﷻ, and away from moral merits and spiritual matters, and drives them toward sinful acts and carelessness.

Activity 5.3b: Analyzing Media

There are many video games that are considered *ḥalāl* to play.

1. What features would you look for when searching for a *ḥalāl* video game to play? Complete the table below.
2. What features would you consider red flags to avoid? Make a second checklist for features to exclude in the table below.

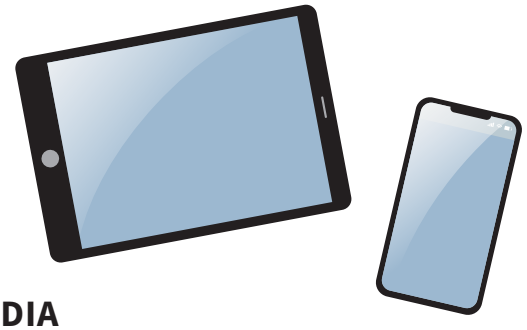
ḤALĀL VIDEO GAME FEATURES	FEATURES TO AVOID

MOVIES AND TV SHOWS

Movies and TV shows are another common form of entertainment in today's society. Some shows and movies are beneficial, while others may have negative effects on our spirituality and psychology. When watching TV or movies, we need to remember the following:

- The content should not include inappropriate scenes, such as people in a state of undress, wearing revealing clothing, or committing indecent acts. We should remember that *ḥijāb* and Islamic modest conduct are Islamic duties, and include guarding our gaze. Guarding our gaze includes not watching inappropriate scenes or scenes that lead to inappropriate thoughts.
- The content should not revolve around inappropriate themes, such as inappropriate relationships, drug use, or other negative behaviors. Some shows do not necessarily have explicit content, but the plot and theme centers around inappropriate relationships or other inappropriate behaviors. Watching these shows is not allowed.

It is also important to exercise moderation when it comes to watching movies and shows. "Binging" on a show for hours is not healthy, nor beneficial, and may lead to negative effects in our lives.



DIGITAL MEDIA (SMALL-SCREEN ENTERTAINMENT)

Smartphones and devices have become a major part of our lives. We can use them for many beneficial things, such as listening to words of inspiration from scholars of the religion, keeping in touch with family and friends, and obtaining information about the world around us. However, smartphones also pose dangers to our health. Excessive use of devices can lead to many psychological and spiritual problems, including reduced attention spans, impaired ability to concentrate, procrastination, and social withdrawal. As with other things, we need to be moderate in our use of devices. The following tips may help us reduce the amount of time spent on devices:

- Set a "device-free" time-period for a couple of hours each day. During this time, do not use devices at all.
- Adjust app preferences constantly triggered by notifications.
- Reduce the number of applications on devices. Keep only the necessary and very beneficial ones.
- When at home, use computers and other large-screen devices that are less private to allow for adult supervision.

In addition to exercising moderation, we also need to remember the following:

- As discussed above, watching inappropriate scenes is *ḥarām* and has many negative effects on our spirituality. Just because someone forwards a clip, or an advertisement appears on our video feed, we do not need to watch it. We should be very selective about what we open or watch.
- We should not engage in inappropriate communication with anyone, and should be very careful in communicating with members of the opposite gender. Just like it is not permissible to be in a private room with someone from the opposite gender when there is a chance of *ḥarām* occurring at the moment or in the future, it is also not permissible to be in a private chat. We have discussed this in further detail in the lessons on *ḥijāb*.

Activity 5.3c: Quick Write

All of the media listed in this lesson (music, video games, television, and digital media) are associated with addiction. Take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

What harms do addictions cause in our lives; and what are some ways that we can protect ourselves from developing unhealthy and addictive media habits?

Activity 5.3d: Review Questions

1. Sumayyah's friend Anisa is listening to music on her phone, and Sumayyah overhears swear words and bad lyrics. She knows that Anisa is a good person and just needs a reminder of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*. What are some of the things we learned in this lesson that she should use to advise Anisa?

2. Music is *ḥarām* if it:
   - **a.** Is usually played in gatherings of sin.
   - **b.** Makes a person want to dance.
   - **c.** All music is *ḥarām*.

3. A "love song" is:
   - **a.** Counted as a "vain" song and is *ḥarām.*
   - **b.** Okay to listen to if the music in it is not *ḥarām*.
   - **c.** Okay to listen to if a man is singing it.

4. Selling or distributing *ḥarām* music or songs:
   - **a.** Is okay.
   - **b.** Is forbidden *(ḥarām)*.
   - **c.** Is not advisable *(makrūh)*.

HISTORY & ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER 1

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

1.1 Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the First Revelation

1.2 The Prophet's Messengership Begins

1.1 Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the First Revelation

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Compare and contrast the narrations about the first revelation.
- Recognize the true sentiment that the Prophet ﷺ held regarding the first revelation.
- Identify the purposes of enjoining good and forbidding evil.
- Outline specific strategies for enjoining good and forbidding evil.

AN OVERVIEW OF PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

Name	Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh ﷺ
Kunyah	Abul Qāsim (and some others)
Title	Khātam an-Nabiyyīn (Seal of the Messengers), Al-Muṣṭafā (the Chosen One)
Parents	ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbdul Muṭṭalib and Lady Āminah bint Wahab
Date of Birth	17th Rabīʿal-Awwal 53 BH (570 AD), ʿĀmul-Fīl (Year of the Elephant)
Birthplace	Mecca, Arabia
Date of Death	28th Ṣafar 11 AH
Place of Death	Medina, Arabia
Lifespan	63 Years
Location of Shrine	Masjid an-Nabawī, Arabia

TIMELINE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

53 BH
570 AD

Birth of Muḥammad ﷺ ibn ʿAbdullāh

We learned in previous years that the Noble Prophet ﷺ was sent to Mecca, where life was rooted in cultural practices, and most of the people were illiterate, and many of them were polytheists.

The Prophet's mission began at a time when people were uncivilized and extremely resistant to any form of change. They would go to the extent of trying to kill anyone who proposed change.

Prior to the *biʿthat* (appointment to Prophethood), the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to frequently escape city life, and spend time alone in the cave of Ḥirā' which was located north of Mecca. There, he would worship Allah ﷻ and ponder about His creations. Day by day, his humility and submission to Allah ﷻ increased. One day, when the Prophet ﷺ was 40 years old, something very different happened!

TRADITIONS REGARDING THE FIRST REVELATION

By checking the narrations against the principles of Islam and logical reasoning, it becomes clear that some of the narrations that exist are inauthentic. If people take problematic traditions to be authentic, then it can affect their entire perspective of very important aspects of Islam. For example, some Muslims interpret the event of Ghadīr Khumm (which we will talk about in subsequent lessons) differently from Shīʿahs, and their entire belief system is then different.

1 Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Vol. 1, P. 139.

Let us look at an example from the Prophet's life.

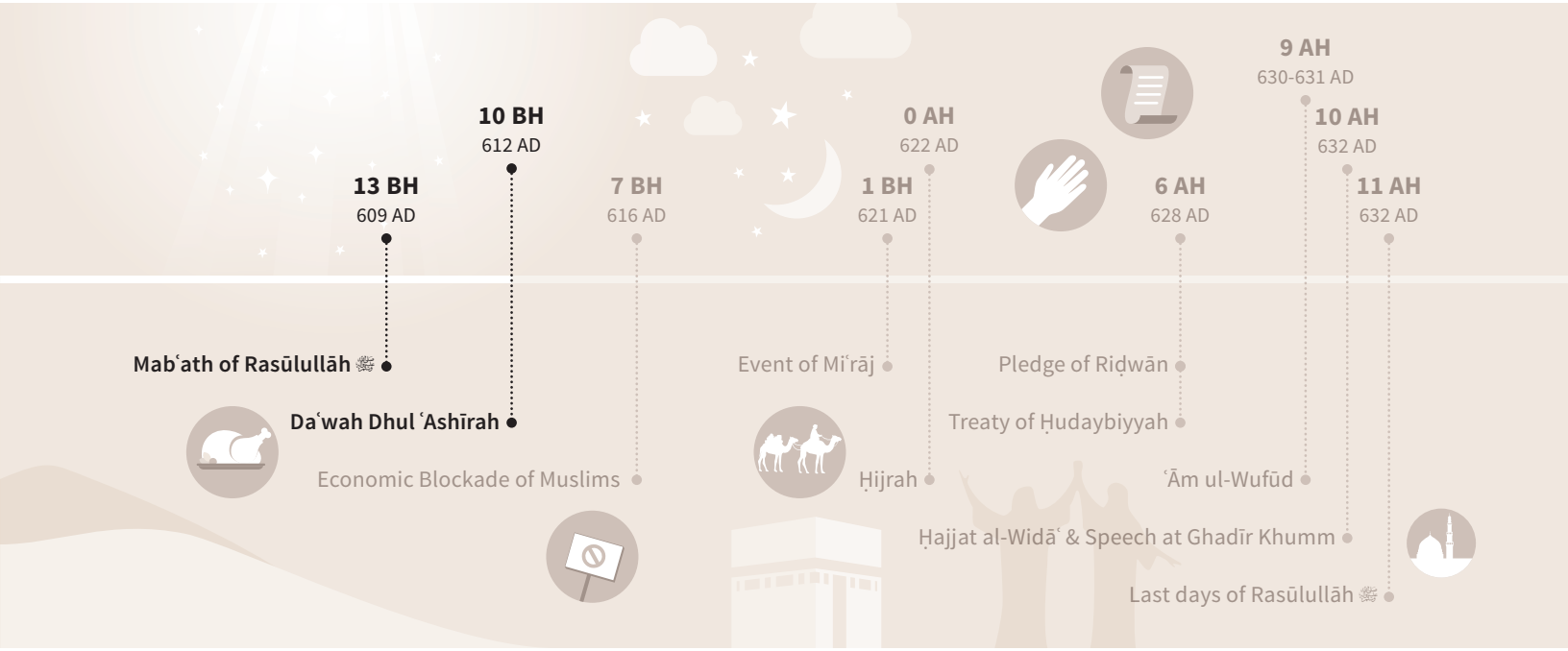
Some Muslims[1] believe that when the Prophet ﷺ received the first verse of Sūrah al-ʿAlaq from Angel Jibrāʾīl, he became very frightened. The Prophet ﷺ doubted what he saw and rushed home, then he narrated the story to his wife Lady Khadījah ؓ. He told her that he doubted what he saw in the cave. She asked the Prophet ﷺ whether he was seeing an angel or devil to which he said that he was unsure.

These narrations imply that the Prophet ﷺ was:

- Unable to distinguish angels from devils, and needed someone else to guide him.
- Not aware of his purpose in life (due to the surprised reaction to Jibrāʾīl's message).

STOP AND REFLECT: What are the problems with assuming that the Prophet ﷺ did not understand what was happening to him?

Many of our scholars use the argument that if the Prophet ﷺ was so unsure about this incident, then how could he ever be sure that any verses of the Qurʾān which were revealed to him afterwards were from Allah ﷻ? If we assume that he did not understand what was occurring, then this can also be an argument against other verses in the Qurʾān and revelations that the Prophet ﷺ received.



In contrast to the traditions mentioned above, let us look at a tradition from Imām al-Hādī ﷺ about this incident:

…When Muḥammad reached the age of forty, Allah looked at his heart and found it (to be) the brightest and the softest heart. Thus, He ordered the gates of Heaven to be opened for him, and sent the angels down to him. Muḥammad saw them, then he looked at Jibrāʾīl who was in an aura of brightness around him. Jibrāʾīl came to him, shook his hand, and said to him: 'Recite!' He said: 'What should I recite?' The angel said:

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقْ
"Read in the Name of your Lord who created…" [2]

Muḥammad ﷺ was overjoyed and excited. He came down from the mountain wondering if the pagans of Quraysh would deny his revelation. Thus, Allah ﷻ willed to empower His Messenger with more certainty and hence he did not pass by any vegetation or rock but they greeted him as the 'Messenger of Allah'…[3]

This second tradition is free from the problems that are present in the first tradition, and are much more in line with what we would expect from a Prophet chosen by Allah ﷻ. Here we can see that the Prophet ﷺ always chose the right actions, and had the best morals in everything he did. We need to always be able to look up to a role model and a leader who has the highest of spiritual qualifications so that they can guide and lead us to becoming as close as we can to Allah ﷻ, and to help us practice all of the teachings of Islam. The Prophet ﷺ always acted in a perfect manner[4] which demonstrated his pureness and elevated status in the eyes of Allah ﷻ.

With the onset of the revelation, the Prophet ﷺ started an all-out struggle to invite people toward the truth. This relentless struggle of his continued through the most difficult of conditions: from threats and numerous wars to political pressure and economic sanctions. Nothing diminished his resolve or frightened him at all. In a backward and hopeless society where racism, violence, and superstitions were prevalent—he planted the seeds for his nation (*ummah*).[5]

On one hand, he trained people one-by-one, passing on to them the pure teachings of Islam that he embodied; and on the other hand he recognized the reality of how Islam needed a political order to be able to attain its goals. Forming a government, forming an army, sending letters to other governments—all of these were indicative of his astute statesmanship. His ten years of ruling in Medina are forever recorded in history as a shining example of an Islamic government. When he passed away—23 blessed years after the first revelation—he left behind a community at the peak of power and dignity. This same system and community, within a short span of time, became the most powerful force in the world.

2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96), Verse 1.
3 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 18, P. 184, Ḥadīth #205.
4 لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ "There is certainly for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example."—Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Aḥzāb (33), Verse 21.
5 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 2.

ENJOINING GOOD AND FORBIDDING EVIL

The Prophet ﷺ not only taught many ethical morals and good values, but he also encouraged people to put them into practice. He ﷺ said:

A person who sees wrong being done should redress the situation with one's own hands; and if they cannot do so, then with their tongue; and if they cannot do that, then with their heart (they should disapprove the act)—but that is the weakest level of faith. [6]

STOP AND REFLECT: What does this *ḥadīth* mean? What are some of the ways that we can put this *ḥadīth* into practice?

Enjoining good means that we should encourage and urge others to do good and righteous deeds. The spirit behind this obligation also means that we should create a social environment where people are encouraged to adhere to the laws of Islam and do good deeds. Forbidding evil means that we should discourage and prohibit others from doing evil deeds. The spirit behind this obligation includes creating a social environment where people are discouraged from transgressing against the laws of Islam or doing evil deeds.

Enjoining good and forbidding evil are collective obligations *(wājib kifā'ī)*. This means that the obligation continues until someone fulfills it. Once it is fulfilled, then it no longer remains compulsory upon anyone.

Here are some strategies to put these responsibilities into practice:

SPEAK KINDLY TO PEOPLE: This will encourage others to do good. For example, yelling at someone to get them to recite their prayers will obviously not encourage them; in fact, if anything, it will cause them to dislike praying altogether.

EDUCATE THEM: If someone is listening to forbidden *(ḥarām)* music, it may be effective to remind them that certain types of music are not allowed. But for someone whose beliefs are not very strong, it might be better to take a different approach. For example, you can describe how our ears are a trust from Allah ﷻ that He has given to us, and one day we will have to return these trusts and we will be asked how we treated them. Another approach would be to kindle the love of Allah ﷻ in the heart of that person by reminding them of how blessed we all are, and how we should show our thanks to Allah ﷻ [7] by using His blessings in the way that He wants us to.

A LIMIT TO KINDNESS: If you have explained numerous times to a person the reasons why something is wrong but they persist in their evil actions, or keep encouraging you to do that evil action, then frowning at them or even avoiding them (at least temporarily) may be the only option left in order to protect yourself and others in the community. For example, if the host or speaker on a particular show constantly makes statements or jokes about skin color despite their teachers and community members reminding them that this is incorrect, then we can avoid them in order to protect ourselves, and express our disapproval of them to others.

The Prophet ﷺ served as an example for us in many ways. By implementing the verses of the Qur'ān and the authentic narrations from his life, we need to also follow his example.

There are numerous ways we can emulate the ways and traditions *(sunnah)* of the Prophet ﷺ and his family, the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. One of the obligatory *(wājib)* responsibilities which we have—when we are certain that it will be effective—is to recommend to others to perform good, and forbid them from doing evil. When we consciously act in this way, then we can change how people around us behave—for the better.

6 Rayshahrī, Muḥammad, *Mizān al-Ḥikmah*, Ḥadīth #4210.

7 لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ "If you are grateful, then I will surely enhance you [in blessings], but if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is indeed severe."—Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14), Verse 7.

Activity 1.1a: Deciphering the Themes in a Ḥadīth

Sections of two *ḥadīth* from different sources are quoted below.
Compare and contrast these *ḥadīth* based on the following questions.

ḤADĪTH 1:

Then when he [Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ] completed 40 years of age, Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, looked at his heart. He found it to be the best of hearts, the greatest, most submissive, and most humble. Therefore, He ordered the doors of the heavens to be opened, and the angels descended while Muḥammad looked at this. Then He ordered that His mercy descend from the bottom of His *ʿarsh* (throne) down to the head of Muḥammad. Then He looked at Jibrāʾīl—the trustworthy spirit, encompassed in light, the most beautiful of all angels—to descend upon him, grab his upper arm, shake it, and say: "O Muḥammad! Read!"

He [Muḥammad] replied: "And what should I read?" Jibrāʾīl said: "O Muḥammad! Read in the Name of your Lord who created; created the human being from a clinging mass. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught people what they did not know." [8]

ḤADĪTH 2:

The Angel came to him and asked him to read. The Prophet ﷺ replied: "I do not know how to read." The Prophet ﷺ added: "The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read, and I replied: 'I do not know how to read.' Thereupon he caught me again and pressed me a second time until I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read, but again I replied: 'I do not know how to read (or what shall I read)?' Thereupon he caught me for the third time and pressed me, and then released me and said: 'Read in the name of your Lord, who created (all that exists), created the human being from a clinging mass. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous.'" [9] Then Allah's Messenger ﷺ returned with inspiration, and his heart was beating very severely. Then he went to Khadījah bint Khuwaylid and said: "Cover me! Cover me!" She covered him until his fear was over, and after that he told her everything that had happened, then said: "I fear that something may happen to me." [10]

8 The special day of *biʿthat* as described by Imām al-Hādī ﷺ in the first *ḥadīth*.
9 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96), Verses 1-3.
10 Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* Vol. 1, P. 7.

1. Why is it important in the context of the first revelation that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ did not know how to read? Would that impact how he felt?

2. How does each *ḥadīth* depict what the Prophet ﷺ felt when Angel Jibrāʾīl narrated the verses of the Qurʾān to him?

Activity 1.1b: Discuss and Write

Discuss the following question with your partner or group, and then write your thoughts down independently in paragraph form.

Before Islam, the Arabian society worshiped idols and had many violent and ignorant beliefs. For the first three to six years after *biʿthat* (receiving the message), Allah ﷻ did not ask the Prophet ﷺ to spread his message far and wide. What were some of the benefits of limiting the message in those first few years?

Activity 1.1c: Scenario

Talha, a classmate who knows some of the jurisprudence *(fiqh)* rulings about how to treat others, has a tendency to make derogatory statements, especially toward classmates who have darker skin tones. You try to remind him that this is racist, but he says that he is not racist because he is friends with Ali Muhammad, a black Muslim in the class.

Brainstorm some ways in which you might try to remind him of being good and righteous, and help him stay away from *ḥarām* prejudice. Remember, we all have a tendency to soak in some kind of racism or prejudice from the society around us, and how we act and speak is very important, especially when it comes to anti-black sentiment in the Muslim community, or other forms of discrimination.

1.2 The Prophet's Messengership Begins

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Recognize the public sentiment surrounding the first revelation and invitation to Islam.
- Identify the position Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ held in early Islamic society and what we can learn from his life.
- Analyze how the Prophet ﷺ countered discrimination in early Muslim society.
- Explain some ways to address cultural prejudice within our own communities.

JĀHILIYYAH:
the Age of Ignorance

GENERAL INVITATION TO ISLAM AND THE FIRST MUSLIMS

Three years after receiving the first revelation, the Prophet ﷺ began inviting the general public to accept Islam. During the first three years, the Prophet ﷺ invited his own family and a few select companions to Islam. After this core was formed, he then publicly preached the message of "There is no god except Allah" and "Muḥammad is His Messenger." He educated the people about the hereafter, life after death, and Allah's system of rewards and punishments based on people's actions in this world.

Many people found his words very attractive because they conformed to reason and logic. At the same time, there were others who reacted negatively towards the message of Islam and began to oppose it publicly and quite harshly.

STOP AND REFLECT: Who were the people who were the most vocal in their opposition to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ? Why was this demographic the most opposed to the message of Islam? What did they stand to lose?

Many people in positions of power reacted angrily toward the Prophet ﷺ because they realised that his teachings threatened their status and interests. They called him a magician who wished to create discord and disunity amongst them. They even urged their children to throw stones and garbage at him as he walked in their alleys.

With a lot of forbearance, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ continued his message together with a few companions who had secretly accepted Islam before this general invitation. These included his wife Lady Khadījah ؓ, his cousin Imām ʿAlī ؓ, and his companions: Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Salmān al-Fārsi, Miqdād, and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir.

The leaders of the Quraysh, headed by Abū Sufyān, could no longer tolerate the Prophet's message, so they decided to kill him and subject his companions to extreme torture with the hope of forcing them to surrender.

BILĀL IBN RABĀḤ

Bilāl was one of the first converts to Islam. He was from Ethiopia, or Abyssinia as it was known then, and was the slave of Umayyah ibn Khalaf. In Mecca, Bilāl's hatred of the corruption that he saw during the time of *Jāhiliyyah* (the Age of Ignorance) grew in intensity. He really wanted to find a solution for it, then he heard about Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ from some people.

One night, he decided to sneak away to meet Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and to hear the verses of the Qurʾān. When the Prophet ﷺ told Bilāl about the message of Islam and recited some of verses of the Qurʾān to him, Bilāl started to weep in happiness, and he immediately accepted Islam as his heart was searching for this tranquility.

Bilāl is an example for us that Islam is a religion for everyone, and if we struggle to find the Truth, then Allah ﷻ will help us on this path toward Him.

When Umayyah found out that Bilāl was now a Muslim, he said: "I will punish Bilāl in such a way that no one will dare become a Muslim ever again." Umayyah and some other men tied Bilāl's hands and feet, and put a large rock on his chest such that his back was pressed against the burning sand. They told Bilāl that either he disbelieves in the God of Muḥammad, or he will die in this manner; however Bilāl continued to call out "Aḥad" (One God). Bilāl's steadfastness in this situation ended up attracting more people to Islam.

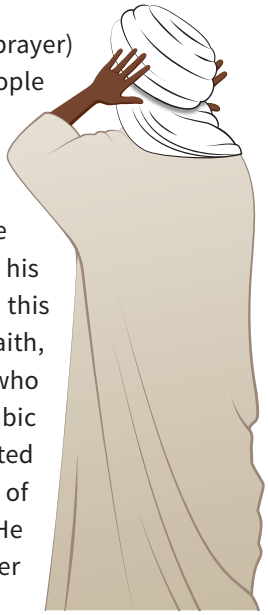
Each day, Bilāl's body was becoming weaker as these enemies of Islam continued to drag him across the burning sands, however Bilāl would not stop calling out the name of Allah ﷻ. When the Prophet ﷺ heard about this violent treatment against Bilāl, he approached Umayyah to sell Bilāl to him and set him free.[1] Umayyah agreed, realizing that this torture was only making the polytheists look very weak as Bilāl continued to remain steadfast in his beliefs. Bilāl demonstrated what true faith *(īmān)* is, and how when we are strong in our beliefs and practices, then people around us will eventually see the Truth.

STOP AND REFLECT: How can we implement some of the traits that Bilāl showed throughout his torture in our own lives?

As the situation in Mecca became worse, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ began preparations to migrate to Medina where people were waiting to welcome him—this event is known as the *Ḥijrah* (migration). Bilāl was amongst those who had to leave Medina before the Prophet ﷺ, and even this small separation was very difficult for him.[2] Every day, he would sit on the road that led toward Mecca, and wait for the Prophet's arrival. This is an example for us how to love the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, especially the Imām ﷺ of our time.

POSITION IN MEDINA

When Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ came to Medina, he built a masjid, and created a pact of brotherhood between some of the believers from Mecca and Medina so that they would be responsible for one another.



Allah ﷻ revealed the *ādhān* (the call to prayer) to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ so that the people would know when it was time for the prayers *(ṣalāh)*. Prophet Muḥammad told Imām Ali ﷺ to teach this to Bilāl so that he could be the one to recite this call to prayers. This demonstrates his great status, and how he was chosen for this important task due to his sincerity and faith, even though there were many others who had both a better voice and proper Arabic pronunciation.[3] Bilāl was also appointed as the first treasurer of Islam because of his trustworthiness and conviction.[4] He distributed the *khums*, *zakāh*, and other types of wealth in a fair and just manner.

The following verse was revealed about the status of Bilāl, and the rejection of the ideas during the Age of Ignorance *(Jāhiliyyah)* that determined the status of people based on class and race:

> "O humankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah are the most God-conscious among you. Indeed Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."[5]

1 Ibn Abil Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, Vol.13, P. 273.
2 Ibn ʿAsākir, Abul Qāsim, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, with edits from ʿAlī Shirrī, Beirut, Dar al-Fikr, Vol.10, P. 450.
3 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol.3, P. 302.
4 Shaykh Ṭūsī, *Rijāl at-Ṭūsī*, P. 189.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (49), Verse 13.

ḤAQQ: rights

MAʿRIFAH: true awareness

After Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ passed away, Bilāl was still a sincere follower of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. He took an oath not to recite the *adhān* for anyone again[6] because he knew that the rightful successor of the Prophet ﷺ was Imām ʿAlī ﷺ, and he did not want to legitimize the rule of any other ruler *(khalīfah)* by reciting *adhān* in the masjid which was under their control.[7] Over time, the rulers realized that he was a threat to their legitimacy, and so they exiled him (forced him to leave) to Syria.

Bilāl passed away there, and is now buried in Damascus, away from the Prophet's grave. According to some historical sources, he was exiled for refusing to give allegiance to the caliph of that time.[8]

Bilāl was a sincere companion who had true awareness *(maʿrifah)* of the status and rights *(ḥaqq)* of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, and he put this *maʿrifah* into action through his refusal to legitimize anyone else's rule by reciting the call to prayer for them. Bilāl chose to live a life of hardship, being exiled, and forced to leave a home he had known for many years, which shows us how determined he was to act on the knowledge that he possessed, and stand up for the truth in whatever way he was able to. We can learn several lessons from this courageous companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and we hope to be in his ranks on the Day of Judgment.

Such was the faith of the close companions of the Prophet ﷺ.

STOP AND REFLECT: What steps can we take to become strong in faith like the close companions of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ? Are we following their examples, and looking for ways to improve ourselves on a regular basis?

Everyone was only to be judged by their piety and God-consciousness

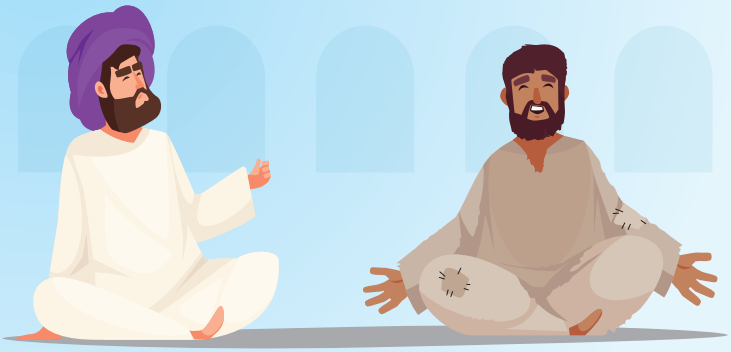
THE PROPHET ﷺ DID NOT TOLERATE ANY DISCRIMINATION OR RACISM

One of the main parts of the Prophet's message was that everyone—whether male or female, black or white, rich or poor, Arab or non-Arab—were only to be judged by their piety and God-consciousness in the eyes of Allah ﷻ.[9] Muslims were asked to sit and eat together with the poor, accept their proposals of marriage to their daughters, and even share positions of leadership with them.

These messages and teachings were not taken very well by those people because it meant that they would have to change their old habits and attitudes at the onset of accepting Islam. Those who were being oppressed loved these teachings, but the oppressors detested them.

STOP AND REFLECT: How would these teachings put the oppressors in jeopardy of losing their power?

6 Al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf,* Vol.1, P. 217.
7 Madanī Kabīr, Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Maʿṣūm, *Ad-Darajāt ar-Rafīʿah,* P. 367.
8 Maḥūzī, Sulaymān ibn ʿAbdullāh, *Al-Arbaʿūn,* Pp. 257-258.
9 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (49), Verse 13.



Once, a rich person dressed in clean and elegant clothes arrived in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ and sat down before him. A short while later, a poor person wearing old and tattered clothes arrived, saluted the assembly, and sat down wherever he found a vacant place.

The Prophet ﷺ had taught them that all Muslims are brothers, and in an assembly one should sit wherever one finds a place, regardless of any status. It so happened that this poor man was sitting right next to a very rich man which caused the rich man to gather the edges of his clothes around himself so that the poor man would not touch them.

Having observed this, the Prophet ﷺ remarked to this rich man: "Did you fear that the poor person next to you might make your clothes dirty?"

The rich man replied: "No."

"Then why did you behave like this?" asked the Prophet ﷺ.

The man responded: "I admit that was the most undesirable thing to do. It was an error on my part, and I confess my guilt. I have a companion who makes good deeds appear evil to me, and vice-versa. O Prophet of Allah! As compensation for this reprehensible act of mine, I want to give half of my wealth to this poor man."

Turning to the poor man, the Prophet ﷺ inquired: "Do you accept this offer (of remorse)?"

"No, O Prophet of Allah," replied the poor man.

The people who were present there were taken by surprise, they thought that the poor man was a fool, but then he explained himself: "O Prophet of Allah, I refuse to accept this offer because I fear that I might then become arrogant, and ill treat my Muslim brothers the way he did to me." [10]

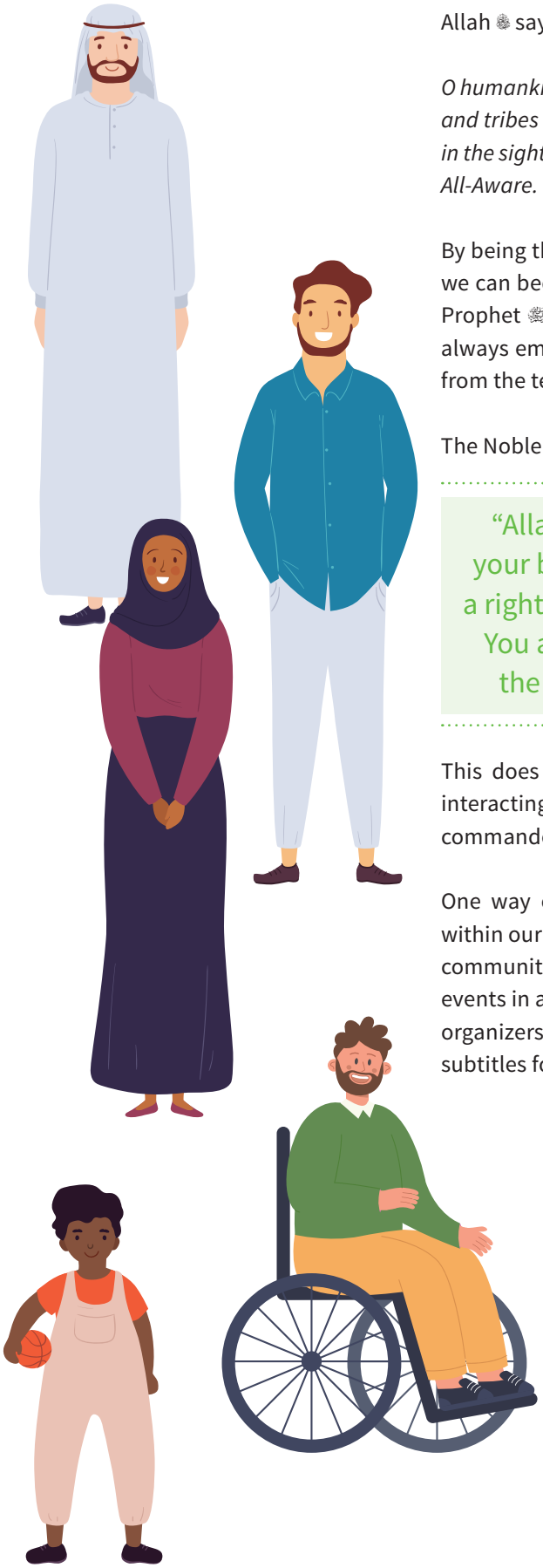
10 *Al-Kāfī,* Vol. 2, P. 260.

STOP AND REFLECT: Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ always spoke in a precise way, and in a well thought-out manner. What do you think the Prophet ﷺ was trying to have his companions realize by asking the rich man a question about his behavior publicly?

We will always come across various people who are very different from us. From this story, we learn that it is important to not look at how someone's appearance may be compared to our own. We should not be overly focused on their external characteristics or their looks. Instead, as Allah ﷻ, His Prophet ﷺ and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ have advised us, we should focus on the good characteristics and God-consciousness *(taqwā)* of people. If we concentrate on our differences, especially outward measures like skin color and brand names, then we will easily fall into the trap of arrogance and cultural prejudices—both of which are sins in the religion of Islam.

One of the ways to address cultural prejudice within ourselves is to put ourselves in other people's shoes. We may not realize that we are arrogant about our culture, and unintentionally (like the man in the story above) show this in our actions. We should try to think about how the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ acted with others, especially with fellow Muslims. One of the ways in which the Prophet ﷺ brought people to Islam was through his noble character and great manners, and we also want to conduct ourselves in the best way possible.

STOP AND REFLECT: How can you welcome someone who is new to your masjid, center, or school? Beyond welcoming them, what are some other ways in which you can help people feel at home in your community or surroundings?



Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān:

O humankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah are the most God-conscious among you. Indeed Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. [11]

By being thankful for the opportunity to interact with people from different cultures, we can become better servants of Allah ﷻ, and learn from the many examples of the Prophet ﷺ and his Ahlul Bayt ﷺ about how they dealt with others. The Prophet ﷺ always emphasized that his message was universal, and that everybody can benefit from the teachings of Islam by treating each other justly.

The Noble Prophet ﷺ has said:

> "Allah does not look at your family, nor your ancestors, nor your body, nor your wealth. He sees your hearts. Whoever has a righteous *(ṣālih)* heart, He will be more merciful toward them. You are all the sons of Ādam, and the most favorite of you in the presence of Allah is the most God-conscious of you." [12]

This does not mean however, that we compromise on our own beliefs if we are interacting with non-Muslims or people who do not practice what Allah ﷻ has commanded us to do.

One way of practically applying these teachings, and overcoming the prejudices within our communities toward people who look or act differently compared to other community members is to try and accommodate everyone by holding programs and events in a culturally inclusive manner. For example, if everyone speaks English, then organizers should hold programs in the English language, or at least create English subtitles for the elegies *(laṭmiyyah/noḥah)* that are being recited in other languages.

11 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (49), Verse 13.
12 Muttaqī Hindī, ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, Vol. 3, P. 421, Ḥadīth # 7258.

Activity 1.2a Review Questions

1. Which of the following did the Prophet ﷺ preach:
   a. Arabs should have priority over non-Arabs.
   b. Men have more rights than women.
   c. All people are equal, and the only precedence is according to one's faith and God-consciousness.

2. Why was it necessary for the Prophet ﷺ to create a group of core followers before spreading the message of Islam to the general public?

3. Which of the following were close and loyal companions of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ? (There may be more than one answer)
   a. Salmān al-Fārisī and ʿAmmār.
   b. Abū Hurayrah and Abū Bakr.
   c. Miqdād and Bilāl.

4. What are some of the key lessons that we can learn from the personality of Bilāl, and his love for Allah ﷻ?

5. What are some of the benefits of being able to learn about other cultures and personalities? How can this help us become closer to Allah ﷻ?

CHAPTER 2

Lives of the Maʿṣūmīn عليهم السلام

2.1 Imām ʿAlī's Strength and Submission

2.2 From Prophethood (Nubuwwah) to Imamate (Imāmah)

2.3 Sayyidah Fāṭimah's Status

2.4 Imām Ḥasan's Courageousness

2.5 Imām Ḥusayn's Resistance against Oppression

2.6 Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn's Early Years

2.7 Imām as-Sajjād عليه السلام in Shām

2.8 Imām ʿAlī as-Sajjād عليه السلام: Reforming Hearts

2.9 Imām al-Bāqir's Early Years

2.10 Imām al-Bāqir's Imāmah

2.11 Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف

2.1 Imām ʿAlī's Strength and Submission

OBJECTIVES

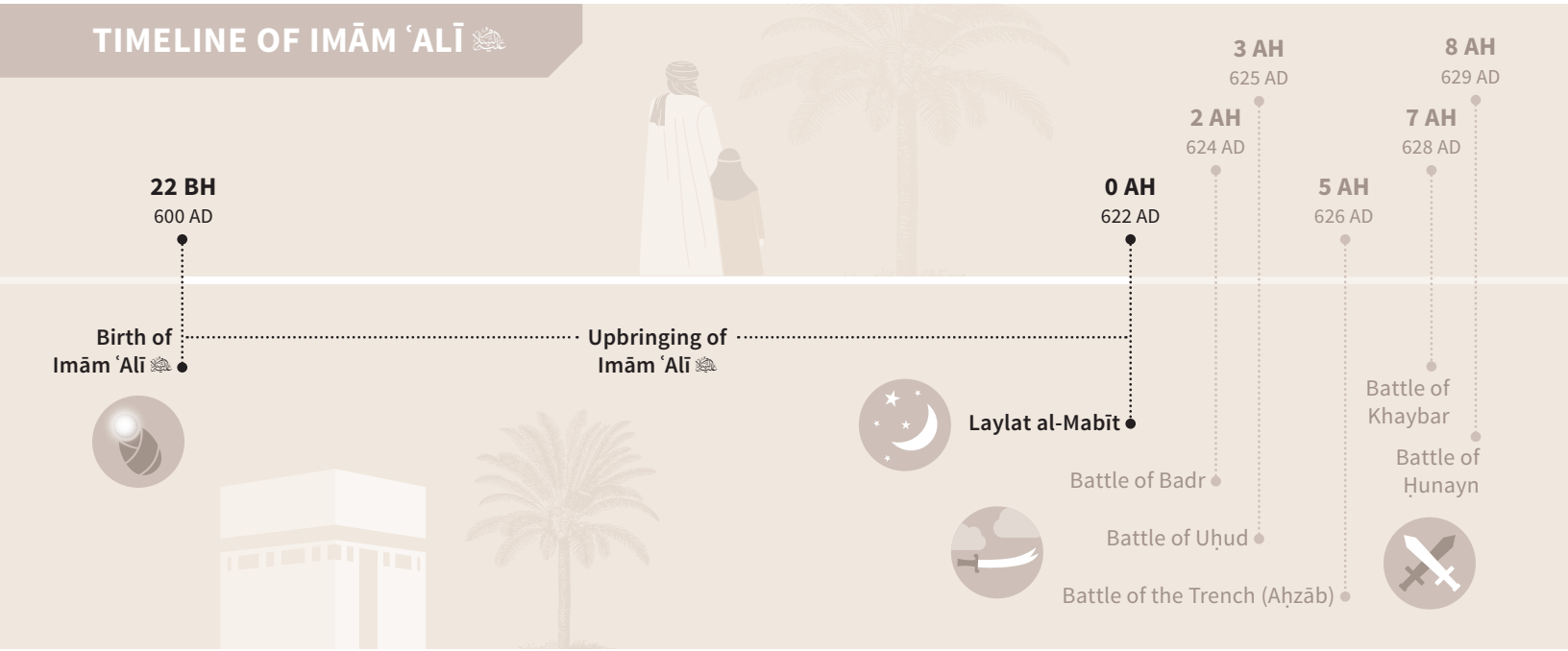
WE WILL:

- Identify the circumstances surrounding the birth of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and how it was a miracle.
- Analyze the importance of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ being raised by the Prophet ﷺ.
- Outline the events surrounding the invitation of the Prophet's family members to Islam.
- Analyze the actions of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ during *Laylat al-Mabīt*.
- Explain how Imām ʿAlī ﷺ demonstrated strength and submission by supporting the Prophet ﷺ in various circumstances.

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM ʿALĪ ﷺ

Name	ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ
Kunyah	Abul Ḥasan, Abul Ḥasanayn, Abū Turāb
Title	Amīrul Muʾminīn
Parents	Ḥaḍrat Abū Ṭālib and Lady Fāṭimah bint Asad
Date of Birth	13th Rajab 22 BH (600 AD), 30 ʿĀm al-Fīl
Birthplace	Inside of the Noble Kaʿbah, Mecca, Arabia
Ring Inscription	الْمُلْكُ لِلّٰهِ الوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّار - The Kingdom belongs exclusively to Allah, the One, the Almighty
Number of Children	27
Duration of Imāmah	30 Years
Date of Martyrdom	21st of the month of Ramaḍān, 40 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Masjid al-Kūfah, Iraq
Cause of Martyrdom	Struck by Ibn Muljim while offering *Fajr* prayers
Lifespan	63 Years
Location of Shrine	Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq

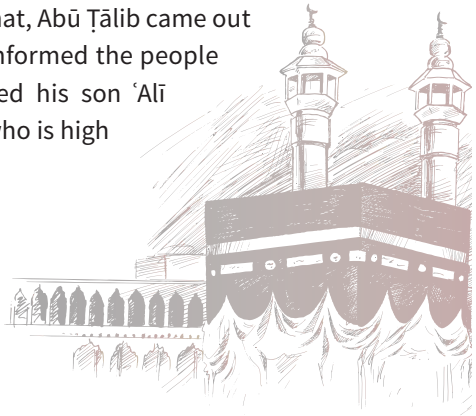
TIMELINE OF IMĀM ʿALĪ ﷺ



A DIVINE BIRTH

One Friday morning on the 13th of Rajab, a pious woman—Lady Fāṭimah bint Asad—made her way toward the Kaʿbah, praying out loud to Allah ﷻ. Suddenly, onlookers watched in awe as the walls of the Kaʿbah cracked open, allowing her to enter inside of it, then closed behind her. People were unable to enter inside the actual Kaʿbah for the next three days.[1] On the fourth day, Lady Fāṭimah bint Asad emerged from the Kaʿbah, from the same crack that had split for her to enter, holding a precious baby boy in her arms.

According to some sources, when her husband and the father of this baby, Abū Ṭālib, found out about the birth of his son, he went to the Kaʿbah and asked Allah ﷻ to inspire to him about what name they should give to their son. As a result, Almighty Allah ﷻ inspired him to name his newborn child, ʿAlī. Immediately after that, Abū Ṭālib came out of the Kaʿbah and informed the people about having named his son ʿAlī which means 'one who is high and superior.'



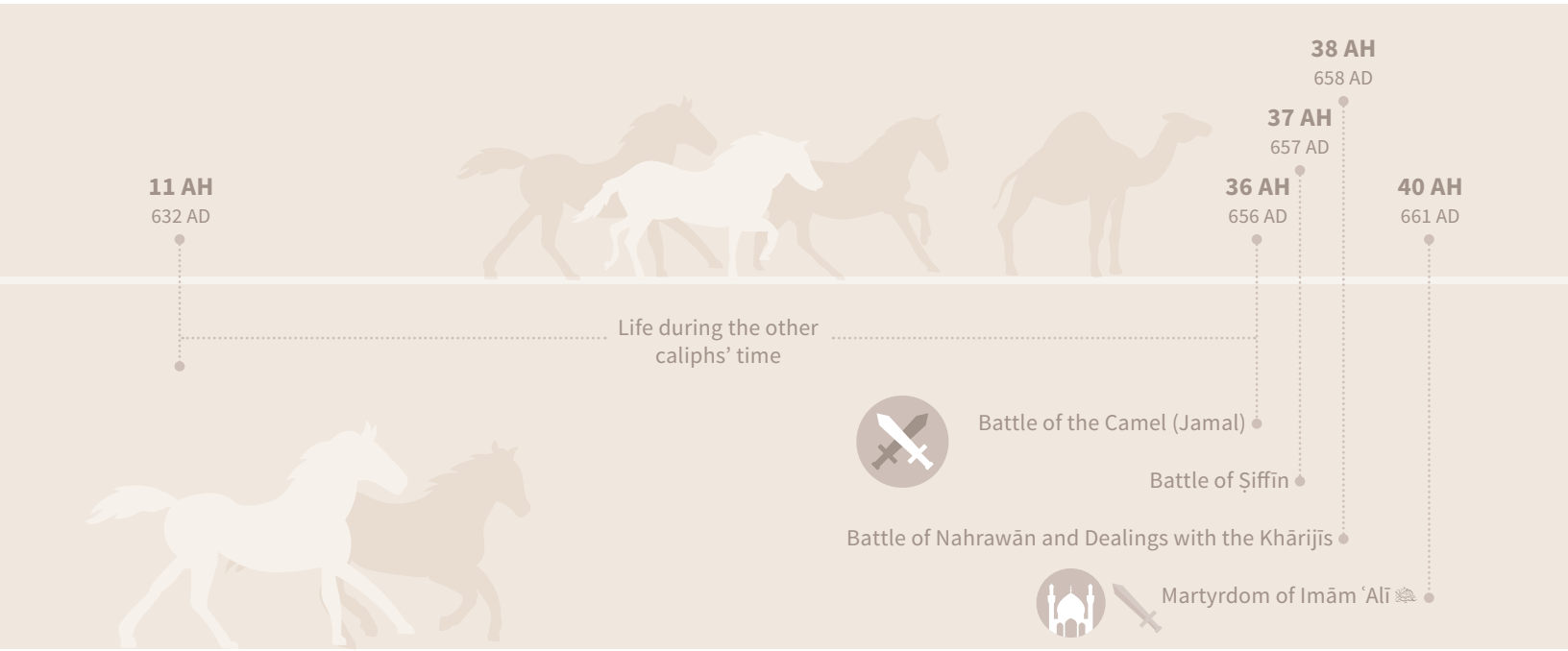
1 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Al-Amālī*, P. 132;
2 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 35, P. 9, Ḥadīth #11.
3 Dimishqī, Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah,* Vol. 3, P. 25.

According to some sources, Lady Fāṭimah bint Asad narrates:

As I wanted to leave [the Kaʿbah], a voice called out to me: "O Fāṭimah! Name him ʿAlī for surely he is ʿalī (exalted); and Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, says that 'I have derived his name from My name, I have refined him with My etiquettes (adab), and I have made him aware of the hidden treasures of My knowledge. He is the one who will break the idols in My house. He is the one who will recite the call to prayer (adhān) on top of My house. He will sanctify Me, glorify Me, and testify to My Oneness. He is the Imām after My beloved—My Prophet, and My choicest of all creations, Muḥammad, My Messenger—and he will be his successor. So blessed be the one who loves him and helps him, and woe be upon the one who disobeys him, disgraces him, and denies him his rights."[2]

STOP AND REFLECT: When Imām ʿAlī ؑ was born, Allah ﷻ had already chosen him as the successor of the Prophet ﷺ. What is the importance of people knowing this from the very beginning?

Imām ʿAlī ؑ was born ten years before the appointment *(mabʿath)* of the Prophet ﷺ. Six years later, there was a drought in Mecca, and Ḥaḍrat Abū Ṭālib's financial position was not that good, so Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ asked him for permission[3] to take Imām ʿAlī ؑ into his home, care for him, and help raise him.



As Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ once said: "I chose to nurture that individual who Allah chose for me."[4] This relationship was one that was loved and desired by Allah ﷻ.

The Prophet ﷺ also said that:
"Allah created me and ʿAlī from the exact same *nūr* (light)."[5]

STOP AND REFLECT: What do you think is the significance of Imām ʿAlī ؑ being raised by the Prophet ﷺ?

BIʿTHAH:
The event where Prophet Muhammad ﷺ received the command from Allah ﷻ to begin his Prophetic mission, which occurred on the 27th of Rajab, when he was 40 years old.

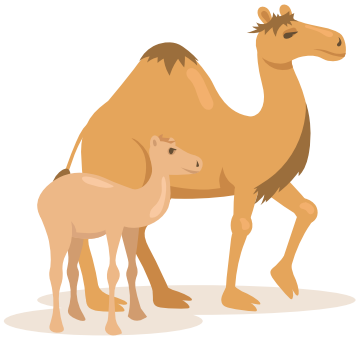
MABʿATH:
official appointment of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

The life of Imām ʿAlī ؑ can be divided into five periods:

1. Birth to the Prophet's appointment to Prophethood *(Biʿthat).*
2. *Biʿthat* to when the Prophet ﷺ and his companions left for Medina *(Hijrah).*
3. *Hijrah* to the Prophet's death (*Riḥlah).*
4. *Riḥlah* to when Imām ʿAlī ؑ became the open caliph (*Khilāfah).*
5. *Khilāfah* to the martyrdom *(Shahādah)* of Imām ʿAlī ؑ.

THE BEST UPBRINGING (TARBIYAH)

We cannot even imagine the type of childhood that Imām ʿAlī ؑ must have had being nurtured by the Prophet ﷺ[6] of Allah ﷻ himself! Sometimes the Prophet ﷺ would put him against his chest so that he could fall asleep there. He would even feed Imām ʿAlī ؑ with his own hands.



When he became an adult, Imām ʿAlī ؑ once said: "I followed him [the Prophet] wherever he went, just like a baby-camel follows its mother. Each day, I would learn a new aspect about his character and morals *(akhlāq)*, then I would accept it and follow it like a command."[7]

The event where the Prophet ﷺ received the command from Allah ﷻ to begin his Prophetic mission is known as the ***biʿthah*** (appointment to Prophethood). When the Prophet ﷺ shared this command of Allah ﷻ with Imām ʿAlī ؑ, he ؑ became the first man to embrace Islam openly at the young age of 10 years old. From the first hours after the *mabʿath* up until the last moments of the Prophet's blessed life, Imām ʿAlī ؑ was right by his side. Tirelessly, Imām ʿAlī ؑ struggled in the path of Allah ﷻ to first establish Islam, then later safeguard it. When nobody else had the courage to stand up and act, it was Imām ʿAlī ؑ who came forward. Even when the pressures on him were immense, he remained steadfast. Whatever he had, he gave in the path of upholding the truth, and it is indeed through him that Islam and the truth were kept alive.

4 Al-Ḥasanī, Hāshim Maʿrūf, *Zindagānī Dawāzdah Imām* ؑ, Vol. 1, Pp. 149-150.
5 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 38, P. 150.
6 *Nahj al-Balāghah,* Sermon 192, P. 222.
7 *Nahj al-Balāghah,* Sermon 192, P. 222.

Throughout his entire life, the Imām ﷺ showed how to fully submit to Allah ﷻ in multiple ways—through obeying the commands of the Prophet ﷺ, and acting in ways that showed his submission in extraordinary circumstances.

DAʿWAT DHŪL ʿASHĪRAH (INVITATION OF THE RELATIVES)

During the first three years after his appointment, the Prophet ﷺ was commanded by Allah ﷻ not to spread Islam openly, but rather only to convey the teachings to a small, close group of people. After three years, he then received the following command by the Almighty:

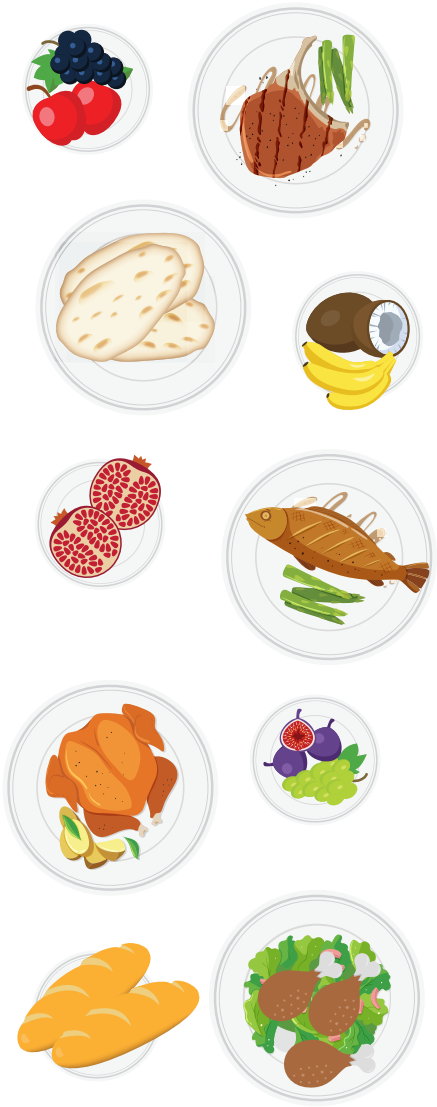
وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ ٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ
"And warn your nearest relatives."[8]

Upon receiving this command, the Prophet ﷺ called Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and told him: "O ʿAlī! Please go and prepare a meal, and invite all of the children of ʿAbdul Muṭṭalib (our family)!"[9]

That evening, about 40 men[10] from the Banī Hāshim gathered to enjoy a great feast. To their surprise, no matter how much food they took, it did not decrease at all! After they ate to their heart's content, the Prophet ﷺ told them that he wanted to speak to them. However, before he could deliver his message, his uncle Abū Lahab stood up and accused him of being a magician, and then convinced everyone to leave. The next day, the same thing happened.

For the third day in a row, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ prepared another feast and invited the relatives. This time, the Prophet ﷺ immediately stood up and addressed his relatives, including his uncles. He told them that he had been entrusted by Allah ﷻ to deliver the final religion—which is Islam. He said that Islam teaches humankind that there is no deity (god) except Allah ﷻ, and that everyone has been created equally as a servant of Allah ﷻ. He then asked the people: "Who amongst you will support me so that he can become my successor and leader *(khalīfah)* after me?"

At this point, only Imām ʿAlī ﷺ stood up and said: "I will, O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet ﷺ asked him to sit back down, and again he asked the same question. Once more, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ stood up, and the Prophet ﷺ asked him to sit down. When he asked the question the third time, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ again stood up, and this time the Prophet ﷺ said: "O ʿAlī, you will be my successor after me."[11] This was the first of many times where the Prophet ﷺ publicly announced who his successor would be. The Prophet's family left the gathering laughing at how the Prophet ﷺ had appointed such a young successor after him.



The Prophet ﷺ said:

"O ʿAlī, you will be my successor after me."

8 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ash-Shuʿarāʾ(26), Verse 214.
9 Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, *Tārīkh aṭ-Ṭabarī,* 1357 Hijri, Egypt, Vol. 2, P. 62.
10 Ibn Isḥāq, *As-Siyar wal-Maghāzī,* P. 146.
11 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 38, P. 221.

WAḤĪ: divine revelation

ISLAM: complete submission to Allah ﷻ

UMMAH: the collective of the global Muslim population

LAYLAT AL-MABĪT: The Night of Sleeping, when Prophet Muhammad ﷺ migrated to Medina, and asked Imām ʿAlī ؑ to stay behind and sleep in his bed so he safely could escape from Mecca.

In his early days, Imām ʿAlī ؑ dedicated himself to the task of spreading Islam, and he became a pillar of support for the Prophet ﷺ. He was neither scared of the hardships that they faced, nor the threats of the enemies of Islam.

STOP AND REFLECT: One of the arguments against Imām Alī ؑ being the successor of the Prophet ﷺ was that he was too young compared to the other companions. How does the story above show that his age did not matter?

Time after time, the Prophet ﷺ would announce that Imām ʿAlī ؑ was his true successor. This story shows that some of the Muslims knew—even before the event of Ghadīr Khumm—that Imām ʿAlī ؑ was supposed to be the leader after the death of the Prophet ﷺ.

Imām ʿAlī ؑ was chosen by Allah ﷻ to be the Imām, and the Prophet ﷺ showed the status of Imām ʿAlī ؑ at various events.

This initial event of feeding the relatives came to be known as *Daʿwat Dhūl ʿAshīrah*. After this event, the Prophet ﷺ began spreading Islam openly throughout Mecca.

Many Arabs began accepting Islam, especially the poor and downtrodden people, who found Islam's message of justice and equality appealing. Seeing how Islam was spreading, the Quraysh began to fear that they would lose their power and status. The earliest Muslims endured many hardships at the hands of the Quraysh to the extent that many of them had to migrate to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in order to seek refuge there.[12]

12 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 18, P. 191.

LAYLAT AL-MABĪT

Islam also began to spread to Medina, and a group of influential people from Medina invited the Prophet ﷺ to come and live among them, and establish an Islamic government there. The Quraysh devised a plan to murder the Prophet ﷺ. They decided that each tribe would send one person to the house of the Prophet ﷺ the night he planned to leave Mecca, and they would collectively kill the Prophet ﷺ so no one person or tribe could be blamed.

Allah ﷻ informed the Prophet ﷺ about the Quraysh's plan through Divine revelation *(waḥī)*, so the Prophet ﷺ decided to migrate to Medina that same night. He asked Imām ʿAlī ؑ to stay behind and sleep in his bed so he could escape from there. Some time during that night, the group of men designated to kill the Prophet ﷺ burst into the house. When they were just about to attack the bed, they realized that it was Imām ʿAlī ؑ sleeping there, not the Prophet ﷺ. They became very angry and tried to track the Prophet's movements.

In later years, Imām ʿAlī ؑ said that he never slept as peacefully as he did that one night. Due to the help of Allah ﷻ and loyalty of Imām ʿAlī ؑ, the Prophet ﷺ was able to successfully leave Mecca and safely make it to Qubāʾ, a city on the outskirts of Medina.[13]

Whenever we are doing any action for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, however difficult the situation may be, we have to endeavor to make sure that our intention remains purely for the sake of Allah ﷻ, not for anyone else or even our own good. Once we do this, Allah ﷻ will elevate our status and give us the full rewards of that action.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why do you think Imām ʿAlī ؑ described his sleep that night as the most peaceful one? What is this description meant to show us?

The true meaning of the word Islam is **complete submission** to what Allah ﷻ wills, as opposed to our own desires. Imām ʿAlī ؑ is the perfect example of true submission. This event, before the Muslims migrated to Medina, was just the start of Imām ʿAlī ؑ demonstrating his full obedience to the commands of Allah ﷻ. In later years, we will learn how he displayed his submission and courage in various battles; and how after the Prophet's death, he preserved true Islam during periods of unrest and chaos in the Muslim nation *(ummah)*.

13 Shaykh Ṭūsī, *Al-Amālī*, P. 466.

Activity 2.1a: Review Questions

1. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ once said: *"I have chosen to nurture that individual who Allah has chosen for me."* Think about this statement. What does nurturing mean, and why was it important that Imām ʿAlī ؑ be nurtured by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ?

2. All of the Prophet's relatives were from which tribe?

   a. Quraysh
   b. Aws
   c. Khazraj

3. The true meaning of the word Islam is _____.

4. *Laylat al-Mabīt* was the night when:

   a. The Prophet ﷺ received the first revelation
   b. The night Imām ʿAlī ؑ slept in the Prophet's bed so that he could leave for Mecca
   c. Another name for the night of *Miʿrāj*

5. In this lesson we discussed that whenever we are doing any action for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, however difficult the situation may become, we have to endeavor to make sure that our intention remains purely for the sake of Allah ﷻ. How did Imām ʿAlī ؑ show that his actions were only for the sake of Allah ﷻ on the night of the migration *(Hijrah)*?

Activity 2.1b: Skit

Imagine that you are a relative of the Prophet who was invited to the event of *Daʿwat Dhūl ʿAshīrah*. Before the Prophet ﷺ gives his speech, what do you imagine the atmosphere to be like? During the speech, are people attentive or dismissive? Create a short skit with your classmates reflecting on this event. Be sure to include the full script. Use the rubric below to guide your work.

	1 **Ineffective**	2 **Somewhat Effective**	3 **Considerably Effective**	4 **Highly Effective**
Body Language/ Etiquette	Struggled to maintain respectful language during the dialogue/ skit.	Language used was somewhat respectful, but there was room for improvement.	Language used was respectful, but body language could have been improved.	Maintained respectful language and body language during the entire dialogue/skit.
Grammar	There are 5 or more grammatical mistakes.	There are 3-5 grammatical mistakes.	There are 1-2 grammatical mistakes.	There are no grammatical mistakes in the poster/script.
Islamic Principles / Accuracy	Content does not meet Islamic Principles mentioned in the lesson.	Content meets Islamic Principles, however there is a lack of accuracy in item description.	Content presented meets almost all of the Islamic Principles mentioned above, while maintaining accuracy of item description.	Content presented was according to all Islamic Principles mentioned above, while maintaining accuracy of item description.
Creativity	Skit lacked organization and cohesiveness.	Skit presented somewhat creatively, but left the audience wanting more.	Skit was presented in an engaging manner, but lacked cohesiveness.	Skit was presented in an engaging and catchy way in terms of content and cohesiveness.
Quality	Content presented was not convincing or compelling.	Content presented did not serve the intended purpose and lacked quality.	Content presented did not serve the intended purpose, but still demonstrated quality work.	Content presented was extremely compelling and convincing.

Activity 2.1c: Discuss and Write

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions with a partner.

1. Did the Prophet ﷺ know that Imāmʿ Alī ؑ would be his successor before the event of *Daʿwat Dhūl ʿAshīrah*? Support your answer with proof.

2. In the event of *Daʿwat Dhūl ʿAshīrah,* the Prophet ﷺ announced that Imām ʿAlī ؑ will be his successor after he asked who would support him three times. Why do you think he did this instead of just announcing to his family who his successor will be after him?

3. Imām ʿAlī ؑ said that he had the most peaceful and soundest sleep on that night of *Laylat al-Mabīt*. Why do you think that was the case?

4. Using your answers above and what you know about the nurturing *(tarbiyah)* of Imām ʿAlī ؑ, and any other events from his life, explain why the status of Imām ʿAlī ؑ should have been clear to the people.

Activity 2.1d: Scenarios

Fill in the empty boxes below with an appropriate response for each scenario discussing what the clouded intention in a scenario can be and how to improve oneself by following the examples of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ. The first one has been done for you.

Then, use the last two rows to identify a place in your daily routine where you have a clouded intention, and how you can improve yourself. Do not share this with others.

SCENARIO	CLOUDED INTENTION	HOW TO IMPROVE
Recitation of the Qurʾān	Someone likes to show off how good their recitation is, and so they recite it out loud anytime someone might be nearby.	Changing your intention to recite the Qurʾān only for the sake of Allah ﷻ. If someone praises your recitation, then thank Allah ﷻ, and remember that your good voice and ability to recite was gifted by Allah ﷻ.
Eating a healthy diet	I want people to praise me for how healthy the food I am eating is, so I eat very healthy when others are around.	
Wearing nice, clean clothes		Believers *(muʾminīn)* should remain neat and clean, and look nice for the sake of Allah ﷻ because He has told them to be clean; and so that they represent their values well.
Praying at the mosque or center		

2.2 From Prophethood (Nubuwwah) to Imamate (Imāmah)

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Outline the ways in which Islam is the complete and final religion until the Day of Judgment.
- Recognize the need for a Divinely-sent guide who can help explain the religion to humankind, guide humanity, and be a perfect role model for people to follow, acknowledging the fact that Islam has not and will not change.
- Compare and contrast the perspectives about the leadership of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ held by various Muslims after the death of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.
- Identify that the Imāms ﷺ have access to Divine knowledge, and are all from one light *(nūrun wāḥid)*.

ḤALĀL:
permissible and lawful

ḤARĀM:
impermissible and forbidden

STOP AND REFLECT: What does *Imāmah* mean to you? How does it play a role in your daily life?

In order for us to become closer to Allah ﷻ, He has given us a clear set of guidelines in the form of a Divine religion. He also sent Prophets to communicate these guidelines and explain them to the people. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was the final Prophet sent by Allah ﷻ, and he brought the last and complete religion, Islam. However, what about after the Prophets—what happens then? Do we not need Divine guides after the Prophets as well? Who are our role models after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ passed away?

THE DIVINE LAW (SHARĪʿAH) IS COMPLETE

We previously learned that Islam is a complete way of life, and it incorporates everything that we need to become closer to Allah ﷻ. There is a famous tradition *(ḥadīth)* that discusses this:

> "The *ḥalāl* of Muḥammad will be *ḥalāl* until the Day of Judgment, and the *ḥarām* of Muḥammad will be *ḥarām* until the Day of Judgment."[1]

STOP AND REFLECT: What does this above *ḥadīth* mean?

It means that we will never need a new religion or a new set of instructions and guidelines because Islam is the best and most complete religion.

However, even though we have a perfect and all-inclusive religion, we still need someone who is the closest to Allah ﷻ to teach us and provide us with explanations of the laws. We also need the best role models to help show us the way. So even though we do not have new laws after the death of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, we still have to have Divine leaders, known as the 12 Imāms ﷺ, who help us apply the laws and guidelines.

AFTER THE PROPHET ﷺ

After Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ passed away, the Muslims split over who they wanted to lead the Muslim nation *(ummah)*. Throughout the Prophet's life, he was extremely close to Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and even raised him in his home when he was a young child. Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was the first Muslim man to believe in the Prophet's message, even though he was a young man at the time. The Prophet ﷺ would teach him everything that was revealed to him from Allah ﷻ, and Imām ʿAlī ﷺ learned the complete religion of Islam and the entire interpretation of the Qurʾān directly from the Prophet ﷺ.

1 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, P. 58.

Near the end of the Prophet's life, he gathered all of the Muslims in a place called Ghadīr Khumm. He told them that Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was their leader and master, and that when he passed away, the Muslim nation *(ummah)* had to hold onto two things: the Qurʾān and the Ahl al-Bayt ﷺ. He raised Imām ʿAlī's arm high in the air as he declared him as his successor; and on that day, many Muslims gave their allegiance to Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and congratulated him on the status that he had earned. This was not the only time when the Prophet ﷺ made it clear that Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was meant to be the Divine leader after he passed away. Imām ʿAlī's ﷺ job was to guide the people, and continue the message that had been sent by Allah ﷻ, and to explain, clarify, and lead the Muslims in all different aspects of life.

However, when the Prophet ﷺ passed away, the Muslims became divided. Some of them appointed a leader whom they themselves wanted instead of following what the Prophet ﷺ had instructed them. Before the Prophet ﷺ was even buried, a few influential individuals gathered together and decided that Abū Bakr would lead the Muslim community. They believed that there was no need for a Divinely-appointed leader, and they could just choose the leader they wanted since they already had the final religion of Islam. They felt that the Qurʾān was enough of a guide, and the Muslims just needed a political leader without the same special spiritual qualifications that a Prophet had.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why is it a problem to only have a political leader without the spiritual qualifications?

The majority of Muslims decided to follow Abū Bakr and he became the caliph *(khalīfah)*—the political leader of the Muslims. This group of Muslims later on came to be known as the Sunnīs.

Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ informed whoever they could that what these people were doing was incorrect, and not what Allah ﷻ had instructed or wanted, but very few people supported them, and most of them decided not to adhere to this Divine command. When Imām ʿAlī ﷺ saw that people did not want to follow him, he did not force them, even though they were wrong. He wanted them to become truly guided, but the Muslim nation was very fragile, and he did not want to do anything that would lead to the destruction of the *ummah*. However, he and the other Imāms ﷺ continued to guide the people as role models, and explained the laws of Islam to them, and taught the knowledge of the Qurʾān.

Even though they did not have the political power that Allah ﷻ wanted them to have and had appointed for them, the Imāms ﷺ always helped the people and guided them in whatever way they could.

We always need to follow a leader and role model who has the highest spiritual qualifications so that they can guide us and lead us to become as close as we can to Allah ﷻ, and help us practice all of the teachings of Islam. Furthermore, we always need a proper connection and access to Divine knowledge; and the Imāms ﷺ are that connection to Allah ﷻ and the Prophets, and they have been given all of the knowledge that is necessary for our guidance. This is the role of the Imāms ﷺ.

THE DIVINE GUIDES

The Muslims who believe that the leaders were appointed by Allah ﷻ after the final Prophet ﷺ and the completion of Prophethood are the Shīʿahs! There are 12 Imāms ﷺ who were Divinely-appointed by Allah ﷻ as leaders of the nation after the death of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ—beginning with Imām ʿAlī ﷺ, and ending with Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ and they hold the highest rank after the final Messenger ﷺ. They are not Prophets, but reached a spiritual status that was higher than some of the Prophets even—other than Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Even though the Imāms ﷺ did not bring any new laws from Allah ﷻ, they teach, implement, and guide us to follow the perfect religion brought by Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

As we mentioned earlier, the Prophet ﷺ himself told us about the important role of his family, the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. The above narration mentions how he told the people that he was leaving behind two very weighty (i.e. valuable) resources: the Qurʾān and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, and how these two will always be together and hand-in-hand guide the people until the Day of Judgment. He then said that whoever follows these two resources will always remain on the Straight Path! This tradition (*ḥadīth)* is known as *Ḥadīth ath-Thaqalayn*, and has been narrated by 25 companions of the Prophet ﷺ in Sunnī sources, and in 82 different Shīʿah sources.

> After the Prophet ﷺ gave this sermon at Ghadīr Khumm, Allah ﷻ revealed the final verse of the Qurʾān, and said that it was on that day that He "perfected for you your religion;" and "completed [His] blessings" upon us; and "approved Islam as [our] religion."[2]

From this event, the Prophet's words, and the revelation of this verse, we can see that *Imāmah* is a very important part of Islam. In fact, it is so important that Islam was complete **only** after Allah ﷻ introduced the concept of *Imāmah*.

Before we learn about the lives of these Imāms ﷺ, we must first understand one very important point. Although the Imāms ﷺ are 12 different individuals, they are *nūrun wāḥid*[3]—'one light.'

This means that although every Imām ﷺ lived during different times and circumstances, each of them acted in the exact same way as any other Imām would have if they were in those circumstances. For example, if Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ was in the place of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ, he too would have made a peace treaty, rather than fight. The circumstances that Imām Ḥasan ﷺ and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ were in differed, which is why they responded the way they did accordingly. Their knowledge was from Allah ﷻ, thus it was complete and entirely perfect. They did not act on their own desires, but rather they acted according to the Will of Allah ﷻ. The Imāms ﷺ all shared a common goal—to guide all of humanity towards their purpose in life—and each Imām ﷺ performed their actions according to the commands of Allah ﷻ, and laid the foundation to help others achieve this goal.

STOP AND REFLECT: Consider what would be the consequences of having leaders who do not share a common God-centric goal. What is one modern-day example of this?

Keeping this in mind, we can view the approximately 250 years from the *Imāmah* of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ to the martyrdom *(shahādah)* of Imām al-ʿAskarī ﷺ as one continuous span. This in itself is one of the miracles of *Imāmah*. These were 11 separate individuals, yet throughout the span of their 250 years or so, there were no contradictions between the decisions or actions of any of the Imāms ﷺ.

2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Māʾidah (5), Verse 3.
3 *Ziyārat al-Jāmiʿah al-Kabīrah.*

IMĀMAH AND KHILĀFAH

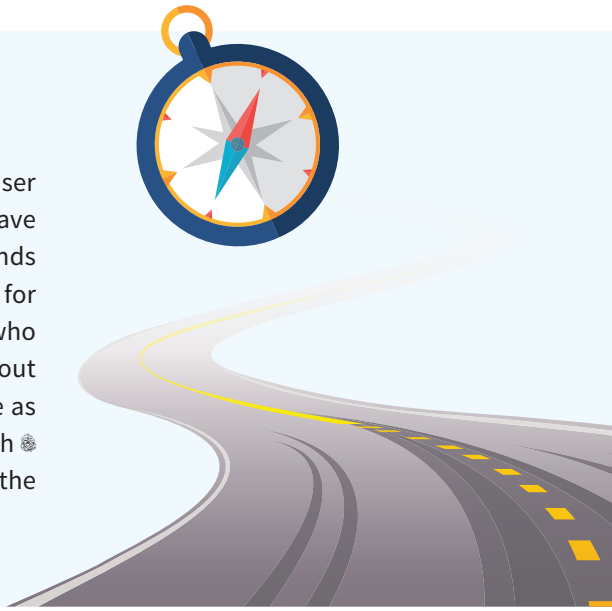
It is important to understand the distinction between *Imāmah* and *khilāfah*. As we know, there must always be a Divinely-sent guide on Earth in order for there to be a connection between us and Allah ﷻ. Logically, we can come to the conclusion that a person who is immaculate and free from committing any sins would be best fit to lead the nation (*ummah)*—both religiously, socially, and politically. The 12 Imāms ﷺ were the only ones who were worthy of fulfilling these responsibilities, but unfortunately most of them were not able to lead politically and openly because other people sought this power for themselves.

Political leadership is called *khilāfah*—caliphate, and a political ruler is called a *khalīfah*—or caliph. This is why when we talk about the first four caliphs, or say that Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was the fourth caliph *(khalīfah)*, it means that he became the fourth of the political rulers after the death of the Noble Prophet ﷺ. The right to rule—or the right to be the true *khalīfah*—was always with the Imāms ﷺ, but we say that other people were caliphs because in history, they were the political rulers.

This span of 260 years of *Imāmah* (until the 12th Imām went into occultation) can be divided into four periods:

1. **The Period of Patience and Standing Firm (25 Years):**
   Death *(riḥlah)* of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ until the apparent political rulership *(khilāfah)* of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ.
2. **The Period of Reaching Power:**
   Caliphate *(khilāfah)* of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ (4 years and 9 months), and Imām Ḥasan ﷺ (6 months and 3 days).
3. **Creating a Foundation for an Islamic Government:**
   Treaty of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ to the martyrdom *(shahādah)* of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ.
4. **Long-term Preparation for an Islamic Government:**
   Martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ until the advent and reappearance *(ẓuhūr)* of Imām az-Zamān عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف.

CONCLUSION



It is clear that Divinely-sent guides play a significant role in helping us become closer to Allah ﷻ. Without these leaders and immaculate individuals, we would not have continuous guidance on how to make good choices and follow Allah's commands completely. After the last Prophet ﷺ was sent to teach Islam, the final religion for all of humanity, the Imāms ﷺ were then appointed to be the Divine leaders who continue to explain the true message and perfect religion. They teach people about Islam and help human beings remain steadfast on the right path. They also serve as role models, and guide and teach humankind to become as spiritually close to Allah ﷻ as they can be. Following in their footsteps is like following in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ toward Allah ﷻ.

Activity 2.2a: Making Inferences

Consider the titles of the four periods in which the 260 years of *Imāmah* have been broken up. Explain why you think each title is appropriate for that period using your knowledge thus far.

1. **The Period of Patience and Standing Firm (25 Years):** Death *(riḥlah)* of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ until the apparent political rulership *(khilāfah)* of Imām ʿAlī ؑ.

2. **The Age of Reaching Power:** Caliphate of Imām ʿAlī ؑ (4 years and 9 months) and Imām Ḥasan ؑ (6 months and 3 days).

3. **Creating a Foundation for an Islamic Government:** Treaty of Imām Ḥasan ؑ to the martyrdom *(shahādah)* of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ.

4. **Long-term Preparation for an Islamic Government:** Martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ until the advent and reappearance of Imām az-Zamān عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف.

REFLECTION: Why do you think the last period spans all the way from the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ to the return of Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف?

Activity 2.2b: Review Questions

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. The following verse was revealed on the Day of Ghadīr. What does it tell us about *Imāmah*?

   ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِى وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ ٱلْإِسْلَـٰمَ دِينًا

   Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessings upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion. [4]

2. Shīʿahs and Sunnīs have different beliefs about *Imāmah*. What is this difference, and why do the Shīʿahs believe in the necessity of *Imāmah*?

3. What happened after the death of the Prophet ﷺ? What did Imām ʿAlī ؑ do, and why did he not take his right of becoming the caliph?

4. Why do we need *Imāms* after the Prophets?

5. What are the *thaqalayn*? When did the Prophet ﷺ tell us what this is?

6. What is the difference between a Divinely-appointed leader, and a leader that people choose?

4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Māʾidah (5), Verse 3.

2.3 Sayyidah Fāṭimah's Status

OBJECTIVES

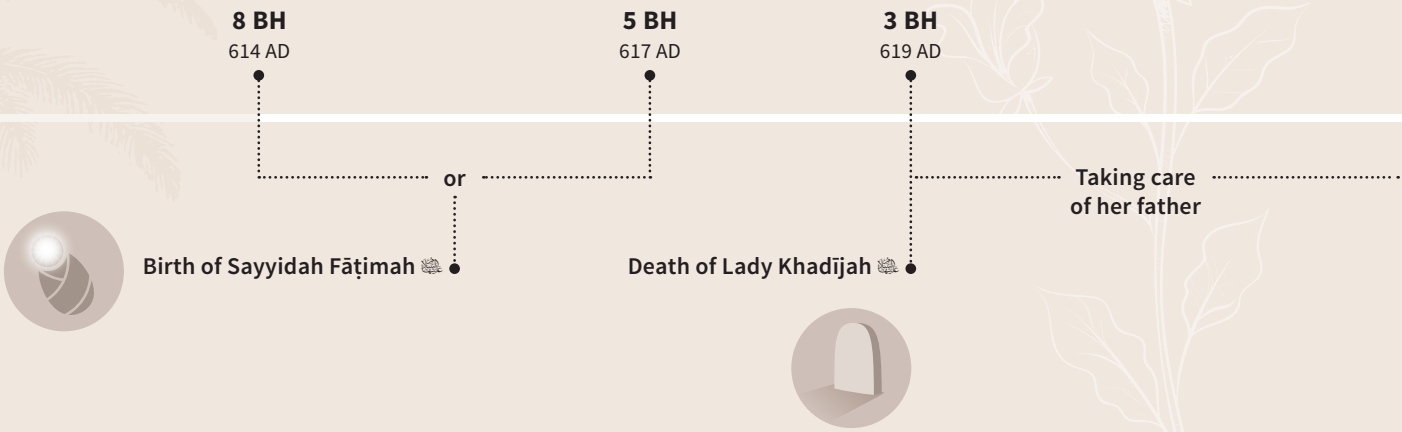
WE WILL:

- Recognize the circumstances surrounding the birth of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﵂, and her status in the eyes of Allah ﷻ.
- Outline the ways in which Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﵂ showed her love for her father, the Messenger of Allah *(Rasūlullāh)* ﷺ by supporting him.
- Develop strategies to show how we can display our love toward Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﵂.

AN OVERVIEW OF SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH ﵂

Name	Fāṭimah ﵂ bint Muḥammad ﷺ
Kunyah	Umm Abīhā (Mother of her father); Ummul Aʾimmah (Mother of the 11 Imāms)
Title	Az-Zahrāʾ (the radiant one, or a flower); Al-Batūl
Parents	Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and Lady Khadījah bint Khuwaylid ﵂
Date of Birth	20th Jumādā al-Ākhirah 5 or 8 BH
Birthplace	Mecca, Arabia
Number of Children	5 (3 sons and 2 daughters)
Date of Martyrdom	13th Jumādā al-Ūlā 11 AH, or 3rd Jumādā al-Ākhirah 11 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Medina, Arabia
Cause of Martyrdom	Struck by a burning door and inflicted with other injuries
Lifespan	18 Years
Location of Grave	Medina (exact location is unknown), Arabia

TIMELINE OF SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH ﵂



THE BIRTH OF SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH

Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ was born on the 20th of Jumādā al-Ākhirah in the 5th or 8th year before the migration to Medina *(Hijrah)*. She was like a blessed light, born to the best parents. Her father was the best man to ever exist on this Earth—Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and her mother was one of the four women of Paradise—Lady Khadījah . When Sayyidah Fāṭimah's birth was about to take place, the Prophet ﷺ told Lady Khadījah : "Jibrāʾīl has given me the good news that this child will be a daughter, and 11 of the pure Imāms will be from her descendants."[1]

When the enemies of the Prophet ﷺ found out that he had a son, Qāsim, who passed away at a very young age, they mocked him by calling him *abtar*[2] which means 'an animal without a tail,' and this was used to refer to someone or taunt a person who had no male children. This was when Allah ﷻ revealed Sūrah al-Kawthar, and consoled the Prophet ﷺ by telling him that:

> "Indeed We have given you abundance."[3]

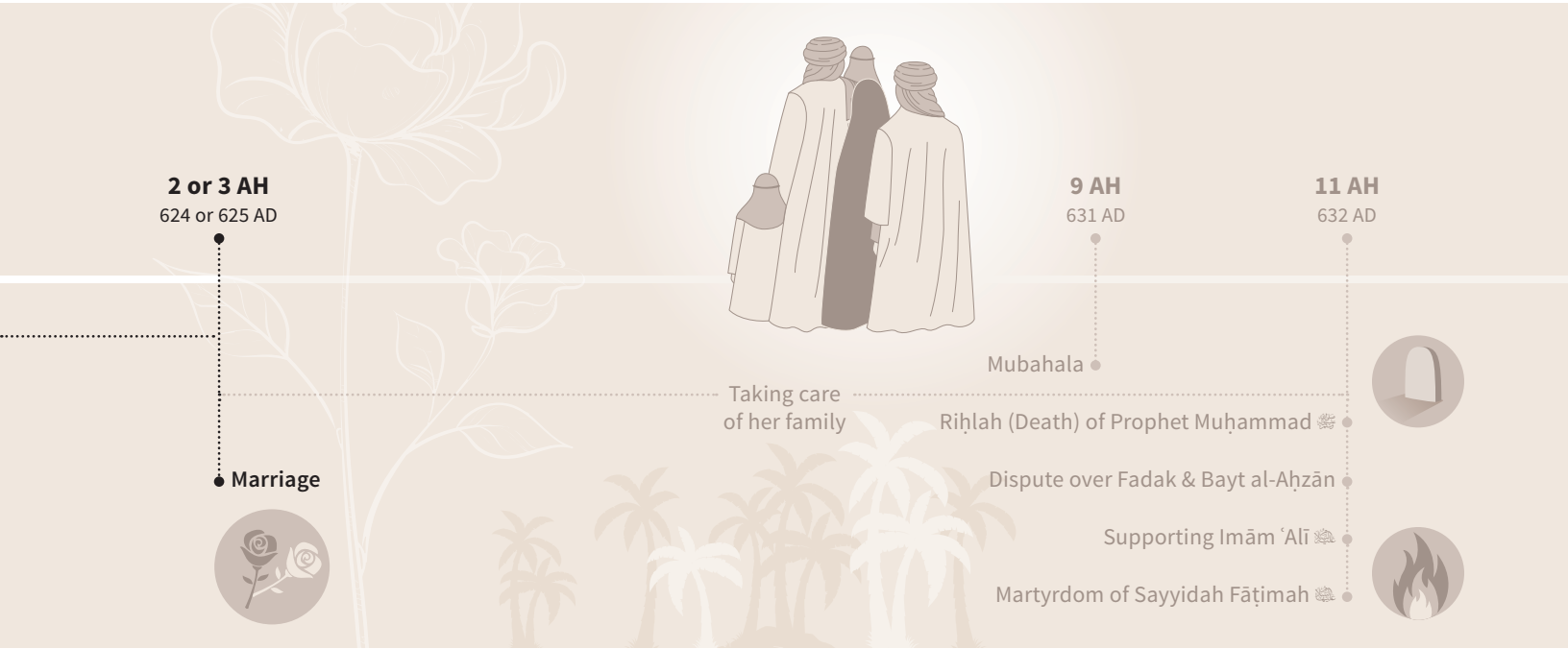
In this sūrah, one understanding of abundance—*Kawthar*—is that it means 'an abundance of goodness' which is found in Sayyidah Fāṭimah and her descendants. In the same sūrah, Allah ﷻ contrasts this by saying:

> "Indeed it is your enemies who will be without descendants."[4]

In these lessons, the life of Sayyidah Fāṭimah life will be divided into three periods:

- Her birth until her marriage, which will also include her mother's death
- From her marriage until the death *(riḥlah)* of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ
- Her father's death until her own martyrdom *(shahādah)*

1 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 16, P. 80.
2 Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat ibn Isḥāq*, P.245.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Kawthar (108), Verse 1.
4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Kawthar (108), Verse 3.



UMM ABĪHĀ: MOTHER OF HER FATHER

As a child, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ was very close to both of her parents, Lady Khadījah ﷺ and Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Growing up, she heard the recitation of the Qurʾān from her father, the Noble Prophet ﷺ and learnt it by heart. She saw the love that her parents had for one another. She witnessed how her mother supported her father in spreading Islam, even when the enemies of Islam rejected him and made his life very difficult.

Lady Khadījah ﷺ often became hungry herself while providing for others. When they finally returned to their home from the exile that the Muslims were subjected to, Lady Khadījah ﷺ became very ill and then passed away. Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ was only about five years old when her mother left this world. During this time, she missed her mother very much, and was almost inconsolable. Angel Jibrāʾīl would come to speak to the Prophet ﷺ and often consoled Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ through him ﷺ.[5]

STOP AND REFLECT: How did the death of Lady Khadījah ﷺ impact Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ?

After the death of her mother, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ looked after her father's well-being. Even after the boycott, when the Muslims returned to Mecca, the streets were full of those who insulted the Prophet ﷺ and threw trash on him.

Whenever her father would return home injured and wounded, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ would wash the blood off of his noble face, dress his wounds, and encourage him with her words. These were the times when her father was a stranger in his own land and among his own people. He was all alone during his struggle and fight against ignorance, and he was carrying the heavy responsibility of spreading Islam by himself, with the help of a few loyal companions.

Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ consoled the heart of her father with her sincere love and affection. Like her mother, she wanted to help him in whatever way she could. This was the reason why the Prophet ﷺ used to say: "May your father sacrifice his life for you,"[6] and he used to call her: "mother of her father—*Umm Abīhā.*"[7] The same way her mother assisted the Prophet ﷺ during great difficulties, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ was a comfort to her father all of the time as well. So much so that the Prophet ﷺ used to kiss the hands of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ whenever he saw her; and she was always the last person that he would say farewell to before going on a journey, and the first person that he would visit when he returned.[8]

5 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 43, P. 28.
6 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 43, P. 20.
7 Irbilī, ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā, *Kashf al-Ghummah fi Maʿrifat al-Aʾimmah*, Vol. 1, P. 438.
8 Hamedānī, Raḥmānī, *Fāṭemeh Bezʾat Qalb Muṣṭafā*, Vol. 1, P. 204.

One of the lessons we can learn from the life of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ is that of practicing goodness to our parents. If we want to show our love to Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ, then we should love and respect our parents, even when it may be very difficult to do so.

After the passing away of Lady Khadījah ﷺ, another trial that Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ had to go through was when the Noble Prophet ﷺ was commanded to migrate to Medina, which is known as the *hijrah*. When he was about to leave Mecca, the Prophet ﷺ requested Imām ʿAlī ﷺ to sleep on his bed while his house was surrounded by all of the enemies.[9] Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ and other family members were also present in the house, but in no way did she express any fear or distress. She spent that entire night in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ. On that night, the following verse was revealed:

HIJRAH: when the Noble Prophet ﷺ migrated from Mecca to Medina

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

"And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is All-Kind to [His] servants."[10]

In the next few days, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was asked to bring Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ ﷺ, his mother Fāṭimah bint Asad, and another lady named Fāṭimah bint az-Zubayr to Medina. During their migration to Medina, the enemies of the Muslims chased this group of people, but they constantly remained in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ while pursuing their journey, and they had Imām ʿAlī ﷺ to take care of them.[11]

Arriving at the outskirts of Medina almost two weeks after the night that he slept in the bed of the Prophet ﷺ, Imam ʿAlī ﷺ found the Prophet ﷺ waiting for them, anticipating the arrival of his daughter Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ ﷺ and the others who were accompanying them.

9 Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. 1, P. 368.
10 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 207.
11 Sabziwārī, *Nimuna-yi Bayānāt,* Pp. 173-174.

SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH'S MARRIAGE

Many people aspired to marry Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ, but the Prophet ﷺ received revelations that each of these proposals should be rejected, as these men were not a match for the faith *(īmān)* and piety *(taqwā)* of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ.

Many of these men wanted to marry her in order to increase their own status in society, but only Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was fit for this role to be her husband.

STOP AND REFLECT: How would marrying Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ have increased someone's status in the society at that time?

In Islam, faith and character is valued, and in this aspect there was no match better than that of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ for Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

> "If ʿAlī was not created, there would have been no equal (or match) for Fāṭimah."[12]

After the Battle of Badr, she married Imām ʿAlī ﷺ on the 1st of Dhul Ḥijjah, 2 AH. Imām ʿAlī ﷺ sold his armor so that he could provide a simple dowry for Sayyidah Fātimah ﷺ.[13] We can learn many lessons from this, one being that she was the best woman, and was satisfied with simplicity.

Once, when the Noble Prophet ﷺ came to his daughter's house to visit them, he asked his son-in-law: "How is my daughter as a wife to you?" Imām ʿAlī ﷺ replied: "I found her to be the best partner and helper in my path to Allah."[14]

Having love for Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ is so important that it will save a person from the fire of Hell. Love can be enough to help one refrain from doing bad things. To understand love in such cases, we can break it up into types of love that reflect our devotion to her. For example, we can have:

- Love in the form of obedience to Allah ﷻ
- Love in terms of hating her enemies
- Love in the form of respect for her status
- Love in the form of imitation, meaning that we should take her as a role model and perform the virtuous actions that she performed
- Love in the form of charity, such that we do practical acts of kindness like what she used to do

STATUS OF SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH ﷺ

Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ is the best woman in this world, and her elevated status and rank is unmatched. She has many attributes and virtues that make her a perfect role model. From the traditions written about her life, we can see that she had an immense amount of generosity, a very sacrificing nature, and a mountain of patience. Her worship and modesty was incomparable as she sought the comfort of Allah ﷻ in her times of need. Her kindness to others was inexpressible as she often gave away her own food to those in need, even though she herself was hungry.

According to a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet ﷺ, due to her noble virtues and righteous characteristics, Allah ﷻ promised that whenever Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ becomes angry at someone, Allah ﷻ Himself will be angry with that person; and whoever loves and obeys her, Allah ﷻ will then love that person.[15]

12 Munawī, ʿAbdur Raʾūf, *Kunūz al-Ḥaqāʾiq,* P. 124.
13 *Kashf al-Ghummah fi Maʿrifat al-Aʾimmah*, Vol. 1, P. 358.
14 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 43, P. 117.
15 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, Ch. 8, P. 220.

Activity 2.3a: Self-Reflection

What are some ways in which you can implement the different types of love (mentioned at the end of this lesson) in your weekly routine? It can start with something small, like reciting the *tasbīḥ* of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﵄ every day after each prayer.

List 3-5 things below that you will try to implement, and make a plan on how you hope to accomplish this. For example, in regards to reciting the *tasbīḥ* after each prayer, your plan can be to start with one or two prayers and then work your way up.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT	PLAN AND DEADLINE

Activity 2.3b: Scenarios

DIRECTIONS: Individually or with a partner, write what advice you would give to the person in each example below about how to do the right thing in the different situations, following in the footsteps of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﵂. Which kind of love for her are they showing by taking your advice?

1. Ali and Taha are late for their soccer practice. They are walking on a very narrow sidewalk when a man in a wheelchair starts coming toward them. There is not enough space for him to pass both of them, so they will need to walk backwards or stand sideways to let him pass which will make them miss the best part of their practice, or they can ask him to wait while they cross him.

   a. What should they do?

   b. What kind of love for Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﵂ will they be showing by doing this? *(Note there are multiple answers)*.

2. Sarah sees her popular non-Muslim classmate ripping out a page of the Qurʾān and crumpling it up, despite knowing that it is part of the religious book for Muslims. Saying something to that girl might lead to all of Sarah's friends ignoring her because the 'popular girl' told them to do that.

   a. What should Sarah do?

b. What kind of love will she be showing for Sayyidah Fāṭimah ؑ? *(Note there are multiple answers)*.

3. Nadia has to make a difficult decision. The local school she is supposed to start at in the fall does not allow students to wear *ḥijāb* as part of their uniform rules. Her parents tried to have a lawyer talk to them, but the country's laws allow her school to keep this rule. Most of Nadia's friends have decided to go to this school, so going to a different school will be very hard for her, and she will feel very lonely without her friends. As well, she will have to take a 30 minute bus ride to the other school that allows *ḥijāb*.

   a. How can she apply one of the types of love above? What is the right decision to make here?

2.4 Imām Ḥasan's Courageousness

OBJECTIVES

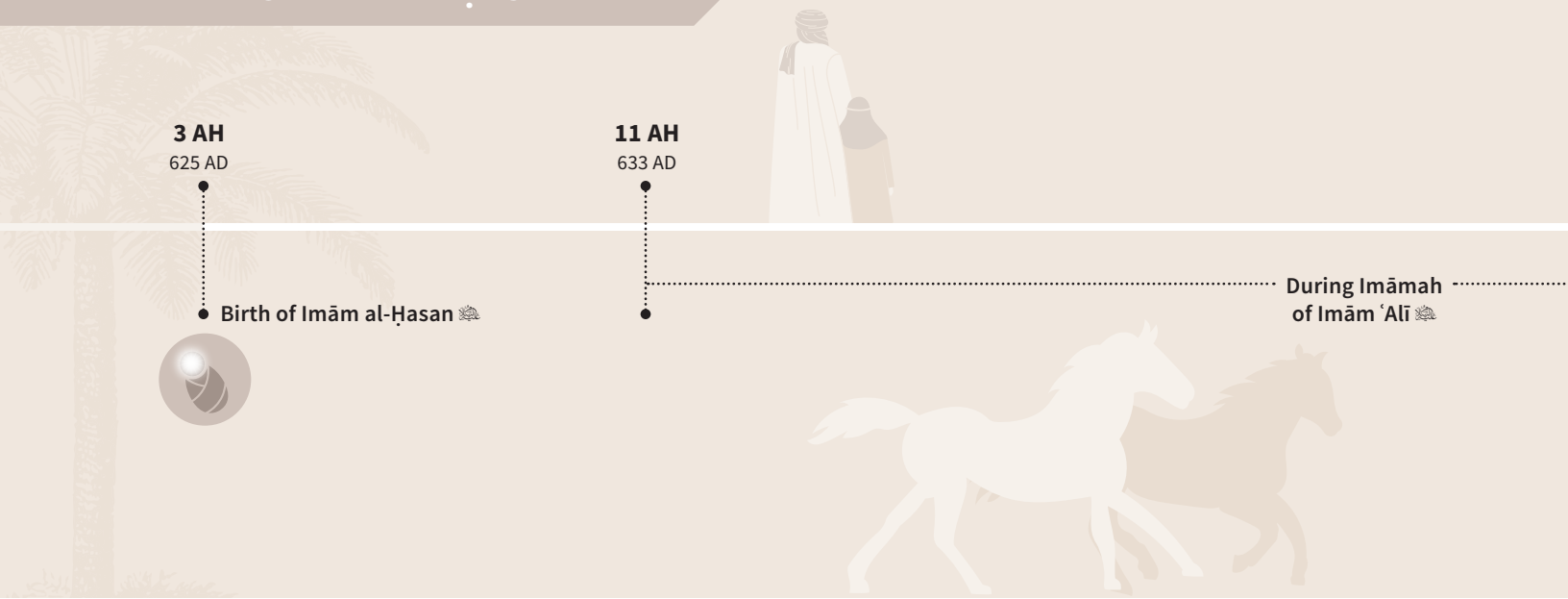
WE WILL:

- Explain the difficulties of the first 37 years of Imām Ḥasan's life.
- Analyze the position that Imām Ḥasan ﷺ had in the eyes of the Prophet ﷺ, and how that informs us about his status as an inerrant guide.
- Outline the various ways in which Imām Ḥasan ﷺ showed courage during his *Imāmah* by acting with wisdom when he was faced with very difficult decisions.
- Answer some of the accusations that were made against Imām Ḥasan ﷺ, and prove how they were false.

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM ḤASAN ﷺ

Name	Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ
Kunyah	Abū Muḥammad
Title	Al-Mujtabā (The Chosen One)
Parents	Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ
Date of Birth	15th of the month of Ramaḍān, 3 AH
Birthplace	Medina, Arabia
Duration of Imāmah	10 years
Date of Martyrdom	7th or 28th Ṣafar, 50 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Medina, Arabia
Cause of Martyrdom	Poisoned by his wife Jaʿdah (upon the order of Muʿāwiyah)
Lifespan	47 Years
Location of Grave	Jannatul Baqīʿ in Medina, Arabia

TIMELINE OF IMĀM AL-ḤASAN ﷺ



Imām Ḥasan ﷺ was the first grandson of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and the first child born to Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ and Imām ʿAlī ﷺ. He lived at the same time as his grandfather and mother for about seven years before they both passed away. When he was 37 years of age, his father Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was killed. By the command of Allah ﷻ, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ became the next Imām, and he was poisoned at the age of 47.

IMĀM ḤASAN'S BIRTH IN THE YEAR 3 AH

Imām Ḥasan al-Mujtabā ﷺ was born on the 15th of the month of Ramaḍān in the year 3 AH. At his birth, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ asked Imām ʿAlī ﷺ to name the baby. He said: "I will not precede the Messenger of Allah *(Rasūlullāh)* in naming him."

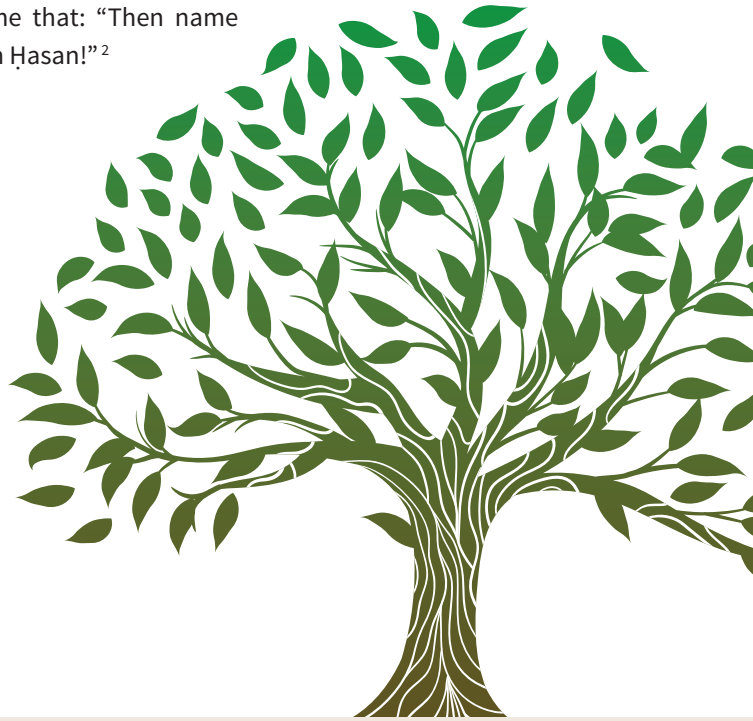
When the Prophet ﷺ came to see the newborn baby, he asked Imām ʿAlī ﷺ: "Have you named him?" Imām ʿAlī ﷺ responded: "I will not precede you in naming him!" [1]

The Prophet ﷺ replied: "And I will not precede my Nurturer, the Powerful and Sublime, in naming him."

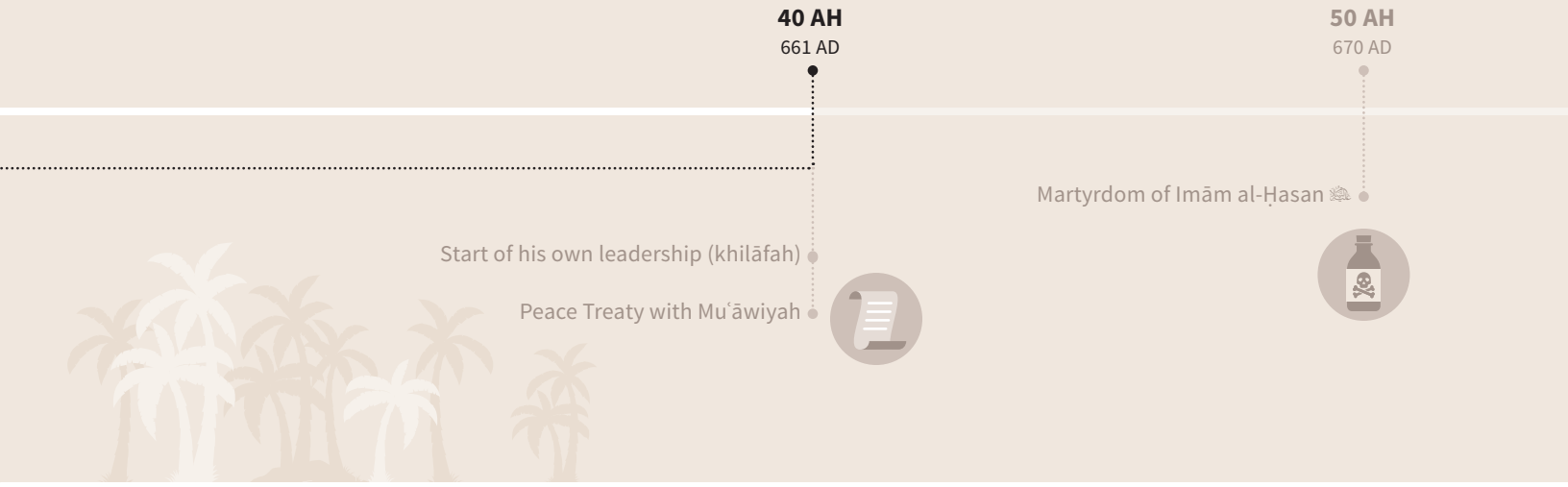
Then Allah ﷻ revealed to Angel Jibrāʾīl that a son has been born to Muḥammad ﷺ, so go down and give him My greetings *(salām)* and congratulations; and say to him: "Surely ʿAlī is to you in the same way that Hārūn was to Mūsā. So name him with the name of the son of Hārūn."

The Prophet ﷺ asked Angel Jibrāʾīl: "What was his name?" when he conveyed this message.

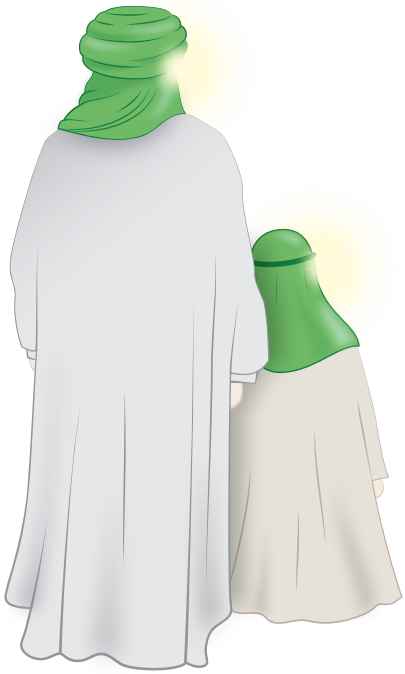
"Shabbar," Angel Jibrāʾīl replied. However, this name was not an Arabic name, so the Prophet ﷺ said to the angel that: "My language is Arabic!" So the reply came that: "Then name him Ḥasan!" [2]



1 Amīn, Sayyid Muḥsin, *Aʿyān ash-Shīʿah,* Vol. 1, P. 562.
2 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 43, P. 238.



IMĀM ḤASAN ﷺ DURING THE IMĀMAH OF IMĀM ʿALĪ ﷺ (30 YEARS)



After the Messenger of Allah *(Rasūlullāh)* ﷺ passed away, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ became the Divinely-appointed leader of the Muslim nation. As we learned in the previous chapter, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was the rightful successor of the Prophet ﷺ, but was denied his position of political leadership. During these difficult years, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ stood by his father and supported him in every way.

After the Prophet ﷺ passed away, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ had to observe silence as per the Noble Prophet's instructions. As a result, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ, took upon the responsibility of defending *Imāmah* during this time. She went door-to-door with her children, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, reminding people about the promise they had made to the final Prophet ﷺ at Ghadīr Khumm to follow Imām ʿAlī ﷺ as his successor.

During this time, and over the next several days, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ witnessed the tyrants oppressing his mother, the daughter of the final Messenger ﷺ, and treating her disrespectfully, but he remained a firm pillar of courage and steadfastness.

As a child, the young Imām ﷺ learned not only from his grandfather, but also from his father and mother. Imām Ḥasan ﷺ used this knowledge to debate with others and teach them about Islam.

The following narration *(ḥadīth)* is narrated about Imām Ḥasan's role in spreading Islam. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

He (Ḥasan) will be the guide of the Muslims after me, and is the guided one. He (Ḥasan) is the gift of Allah to me; and he will talk about me. He will introduce my religion and lifestyle to the people. He will revive my sunnah (traditions). He will manage my affairs by his actions, and Allah has mercy upon him. May Allah have mercy upon those who acknowledge this status and do good to him for my sake. [3]

Oftentimes, when the first and second caliphs would turn to Imām ʿAlī ﷺ for answers to difficult questions, he would direct them to Imām Ḥasan ﷺ who was only a child, but possessed deep knowledge of Islam. For example, there is a story of a man who was in *iḥrām* (the specific clothing a person has to wear when one goes for pilgrimage) who ate some ostrich eggs, then realized his mistake and wanted to find out what the penalty *(kaffārah)* was in this situation. He first asked Abū Bakr who sent him to ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb who sent him to ʿAbdur Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf, who sent him to Imām ʿAlī ﷺ. Imām ʿAlī ﷺ then told him: "Ask any of my sons (Imām Ḥasan or Imām Ḥusayn)." The man then asked Imām Ḥasan ﷺ who gave him the complete answer, despite his young age.[4]

3 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 43, P. 333.
4 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 43, P. 355.

THE BRAVERY OF IMĀM ḤASAN ﷺ

Although Imām ʿAlī ﷺ prevented Imām Ḥasan ﷺ from going into the battlefield in order to protect the Progeny of the Prophet ﷺ, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ still played a very important role in the battles of Jamal and Ṣiffīn. Furthermore, history clearly shows that this Imām ﷺ was a fearless warrior.

In the battle of Ṣiffīn, the right wing of the army was under the command of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ and Imām Husayn ﷺ. This was due to the tremendous courage that they both displayed by leading the army with their intellect as opposed to their anger which served a greater purpose. In regards to courage, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ narrates that: "There is no one more courageous than the wise."[5]

During the battle of Ṣiffīn, Muʿāwiyah sent ʿUbaydullāh ibn ʿUmar to try and incite the second Imām by saying to him: "Stop supporting your father, and we will make you the caliph. The Quraysh do not like your father because he is responsible for killing many of their elders, but they are prepared to accept you as their leader."[6]

Imām Ḥasan ﷺ refused their request by replying: "The Quraysh wanted to destroy Islam, whereas my father killed their elders for the sake of Allah and to save Islam. This is the basis of why they hate my father!"

When Imām ʿAlī ﷺ wanted to prepare an army for the battle of Jamal, he sent Imām Ḥasan ﷺ to Kūfah to establish an army. When Imām Ḥasan ﷺ went there, he delivered a powerful and eloquent speech, after which 12,000 men[7] joined Imām ʿAlī ﷺ for the battle.

During this battle, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ ordered Imām Ḥasan ﷺ to attack the actual camel *(jamal)* after Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyyah was unsuccessful, and the second Imām ﷺ returned promptly with a bloody spear and the camel being brought down to the ground. Then Imām ʿAlī ﷺ told Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyyah: "Do not be embarrassed because he (Ḥasan) is the son of the Prophet ﷺ, and you are my son."[8]

Imām Ḥasan ﷺ was 37 years old when his father was martyred. During the 30 years which he spent under the *Imāmah* of his father, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ observed key leadership skills, such as remaining patient in very difficult times, and ruling justly, and these were vital when he himself became the leader. He had been given the necessary skills to govern and lead from a Divine source.

STOP AND REFLECT: A leader cannot rule properly without having wisdom in decision-making and without justice. What do you think happens when leaders who govern do not have these two traits?

5 Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam,* Vol. 1, P. 773.
6 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 43, P. 345.
7 Amīn ʿĀmilī, Sayyid Muḥsin, *Sīreh Maʿsūmīn,* Vol. 5, P. 24.
8 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 32 P. 187.

THE IMĀMAH OF IMĀM ḤASAN ﷺ: A DIVINE DECREE

The *Imāmah* of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ [as is the case with all of the 12 Imāms ﷺ] was a Divine decree of Allah ﷻ that the Prophet ﷺ emphasised in his life on a number of occasions. On one occasion, the Prophet ﷺ said:

I am worthier of the believers than themselves, then my brother ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib will be worthier of the believers than themselves. When he is martyred, then his son Ḥasan will be worthier of the believers than themselves; then after him Ḥusayn will be worthier of the believers than themselves… [9]

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST IMĀM ḤASAN ﷺ

Imām Ḥasan ﷺ lived at a time of great problems within the Muslim community. Muʿāwiyah, a staunch enemy of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, was trying to take full control of the Muslim world. His main strategy was to discredit the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ by trying to hurt the reputation of the Imāms ﷺ through false accusations and rumors. Some of these were widely spread and even persist until today.

STOP AND REFLECT: How did spreading rumors about the Imāms ﷺ make Muʿāwiyah's position as a caliph stronger? Why were people so quick to believe these rumors?

After the death of the Prophet ﷺ, the nation became very divided. Anyone who had power or wealth could easily convince people to follow them, especially if they 'claimed' to be more righteous than others. Our Imāms' ﷺ excellent character and good morals made people naturally inclined to follow them, so their enemies started to create doubts about their character.

Another factor that affected Muʿāwiyah being able to spread these rumors so quickly was the way news was communicated at that time. People relied on word of mouth, and those living in Syria were far from both Medina and Kūfah, where Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and his family lived.

Muʿāwiyah used to pay people to pretend and lie that they had met the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ and tell others that they ﷺ were mean individuals, had bad conduct, and even committed sins publicly. Since most people had not met the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, when they heard so many of these false reports from those who claimed to have met them, they naturally believed them and then even spread these false reports themselves. For example, it is reported that Muʿāwiyah offered 100,000 *dirhams* (gold coins) to Samūrah ibn Jundab so that he would deliver a sermon to the Syrian people in which he fabricated a tradition saying that the following verses of Qurʾān were revealed regarding Imām ʿAlī ﷺ:

And among the people is he whose talk about worldly life impresses you, and he holds Allah witness to what is in his heart, although he is the staunchest of enemies. And if he were to wield authority, he would try to cause corruption in the land and ruin the crop and the stock; and Allah does not like corruption.[10]

At first, Samūrah refused, but then Muʿāwiyah offered him 200,000 *dirhams*, and later 300,000 *dirhams*, but he still did not accept. Finally, when Muʿāwiyah offered him 400,000 dirhams, he accepted.[11]

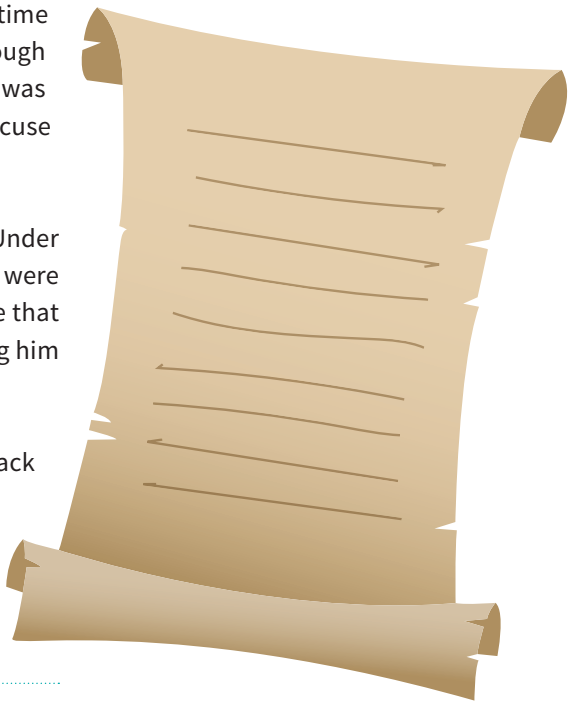
STOP AND REFLECT: To this day, 'fake news' spreads easily and quickly. What are some ways that a person can discern the difference between true and false reports?

9 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 36 P. 231.
10 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verses 204-205.
11 Ibn Abil Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, Vol. 4, P. 73.

ANOTHER ACCUSATION: IMĀM ḤASAN ﷺ WAS NOT A COURAGEOUS IMĀM

It is clear from history that Imām Ḥasan ﷺ was ready to fight against Muʿāwiyah; in fact he had even prepared an army to do so. Imām Ḥasan's intention to fight was to uproot evil, and establish the true teachings of the Qurʾān and the Prophet ﷺ. Imām Ḥasan ﷺ had a lot of experience in fighting, and he had fought many battles alongside his father Imām ʿAlī ﷺ.

Courage is required to perform the most righteous actions, regardless of what people say or do to oppose you. Imām Ḥasan ﷺ knew that a war at that particular time was not the best thing for the Muslims under those circumstances, even though many of the people who remained in his army wanted to fight. Imām Ḥasan ﷺ was courageous enough to insist on peace, although he knew that people would accuse him of weakness and even disbelief!



After his truce with Imām Ḥasan ﷺ, Muʿāwiyah was worried about the Khawārij. Under the leadership of someone called Ḥawtharah al-Asadī, the Khawārij of Kūfah were preparing an army to fight against Muʿāwiyah. In order to try to show the people that Imām Ḥasan ﷺ was his obedient follower, Muʿāwiyah sent him a message asking him to be in charge of defeating the uprising.

Imām Ḥasan ﷺ responded back in a harsh message: "By Allah, I barely held back from fighting you in order to spare the blood of the Muslims. Should I fight people on your behalf when, by Allah, you deserve to be fought more than them?" [12]

These examples show us that true courage goes beyond battles or events that require warfare.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why does it require courage to act with wisdom? How did our Imāms ﷺ embody this?

Imām Ḥasan ﷺ made it clear to Muʿāwiyah that entering into a truce does not mean that he accepted Muʿāwiyah as a leader. In fact, the Imām ﷺ continued to do whatever was right in every situation—despite Muʿāwiyah's wishes.

12 Irbilī, ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā, *Kashf al-Ghummah fi Maʿrifat al-Aʾimmah*, Vol. 2, P. 199.

Activity 2.4a: Review Questions

1. Imām Ḥasan ﷺ signed a peace treaty because:
   a. He wanted to prevent any further bloodshed of the true believers
   b. He wanted to expose Muʿāwiyah's true intentions
   c. Both of the above

2. Why did the Prophet ﷺ emphasize his love for Imām Ḥasan ﷺ so much?

3. Imām Ḥasan ﷺ was how old when the Prophet ﷺ and his mother ﷺ passed away?
   a. About 4 years old
   b. About 8 years old
   c. About 11 years old
   d. None of the above

4. How did Imām Ḥasan ﷺ support his father, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ, during his *Imāmah*?

5. What are some important skills which Imām Ḥasan ﷺ learned from his father that prepared him to become the next Imām?

6. The Prophet ﷺ said: "I am worthier of the believers than themselves, then my brother ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib will be worthier of the believers than themselves. When he is martyred, then his son Ḥasan ؑ will be worthier of the believers than themselves; then after him Ḥusayn ؑ will be worthier of the believers than themselves..."[13]

   Is the order of the names important in this *ḥadith*? Why did the Prophet ﷺ include himself in the beginning?

13 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 36, P. 231.

Activity 2.4b: Wisdom in Speech

Imām Ḥasan ﷺ was known for his wisdom, courage, and patience. One example of this is when visitors from Syria or surrounding areas—often victims of the lies and rumors spread by Muʿāwiyah—would curse and insult the Imām ﷺ to his face. Imām Ḥasan ﷺ would not let his followers punish these people, instead, he would respond by asking these travellers if they needed anything.[14] This happened multiple times in his life.

Muʿāwiyah paid people to pretend that they had met the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, then tell others that they ﷺ were mean, had bad conduct, or even committed sins publicly, so people visiting Medina would come with a very negative view of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ.

Below, find a list of scenarios that can happen in our lives where we need to act courageously by either raising our voices against injustice, swallowing our anger, or making peace with others.

Which response is most appropriate in each situation? Are there multiple ways to respond?

Discuss your answers with a partner or a group.

1. Your friend tells you that one of your Muslim classmates is saying unkind things about everyone in your family. What do you tell your friend? How should you act toward that classmate?

2. Your city recently passed a law which states that men and women wearing any sort of religious clothing, including *ḥijāb* for women, cannot go to public buildings or gatherings without facing hefty fines. What is your responsibility? What should you do?

14 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, P. 344.

3. Someone graffitied a local Islamic school which is managed by Muslims of a different school of thought. What should you do?

4. A Muslim friend, who has had a very tough home life due to their mother passing away when they were just a baby, asks if they can come to your house to study. At your house, they break one of your valuable things, and eat an entire box of your favorite snack. When they leave, they do not really thank you for your hospitality. What would you do?

5. Saminah and Tahirah, two Muslims from your mosque, post some nasty comments aimed at each other online. You know that adults from your community can see their posts, and their behavior reflects badly on them and your community. What should you do in this situation?

2.5 Imām Ḥusayn's Resistance against Oppression

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Describe the circumstances around the birth of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ and Prophet Muḥammad's love for him.
- Outline the ways in which Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ supported the leadership *(Imāmah)* of his brother, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ.
- Analyze the reasons for Imām Ḥusayn's stance against Yazīd.
- Explain why the visitation *(ziyārah)* of the grave of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ holds such a high status.

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ

Name	Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ
Kunyah	Abū ʿAbdillāh
Title	Sayyid ash-Shuhadāʾ
Parents	Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ
Date of Birth	3rd Shaʿbān 4 AH
Birthplace	Medina, Arabia
Duration of Imāmah	10 years
Date of Martyrdom	10th Muḥarram 61 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Karbalāʾ, Iraq
Cause of Martyrdom	Beheaded on the Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ
Lifespan	57 years
Location of Shrine	Karbalāʾ, Iraq

TIMELINE OF IMĀM AL-ḤUSAYN ﷺ

4 AH
626 AD

Birth of Imām al-Ḥusayn ﷺ

11 AH
634 AD

Riḥlah of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

During Imāmah of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ

BIRTH TO THE RIḤLAH OF THE NOBLE PROPHET ﷺ:
3rd Shaʿbān 4 AH to 28th Ṣafar 11 AH (6 ½ Years)

RIḤLAH: death

SHAHĀDAH: martyrdom

IMĀMAH: leadership

The blessed birth of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ took place on the 3rd of Shaʿbān in the 4th year after the migration *(hijrah)*. The house of the Prophet ﷺ was overcome with joy when Angel Jibrāʾīl descended to congratulate the Prophet ﷺ, and inform him that Allah ﷻ had chosen a name for this baby which was Ḥusayn, meaning 'goodness.'

The Noble Prophet ﷺ always gave Imām Ḥasan ؑ and Imām Ḥusayn ؑ a lot of love and attention. He wanted everyone to know his grandsons, because they would be the leaders of the Muslims after him. He would frequently be heard saying:

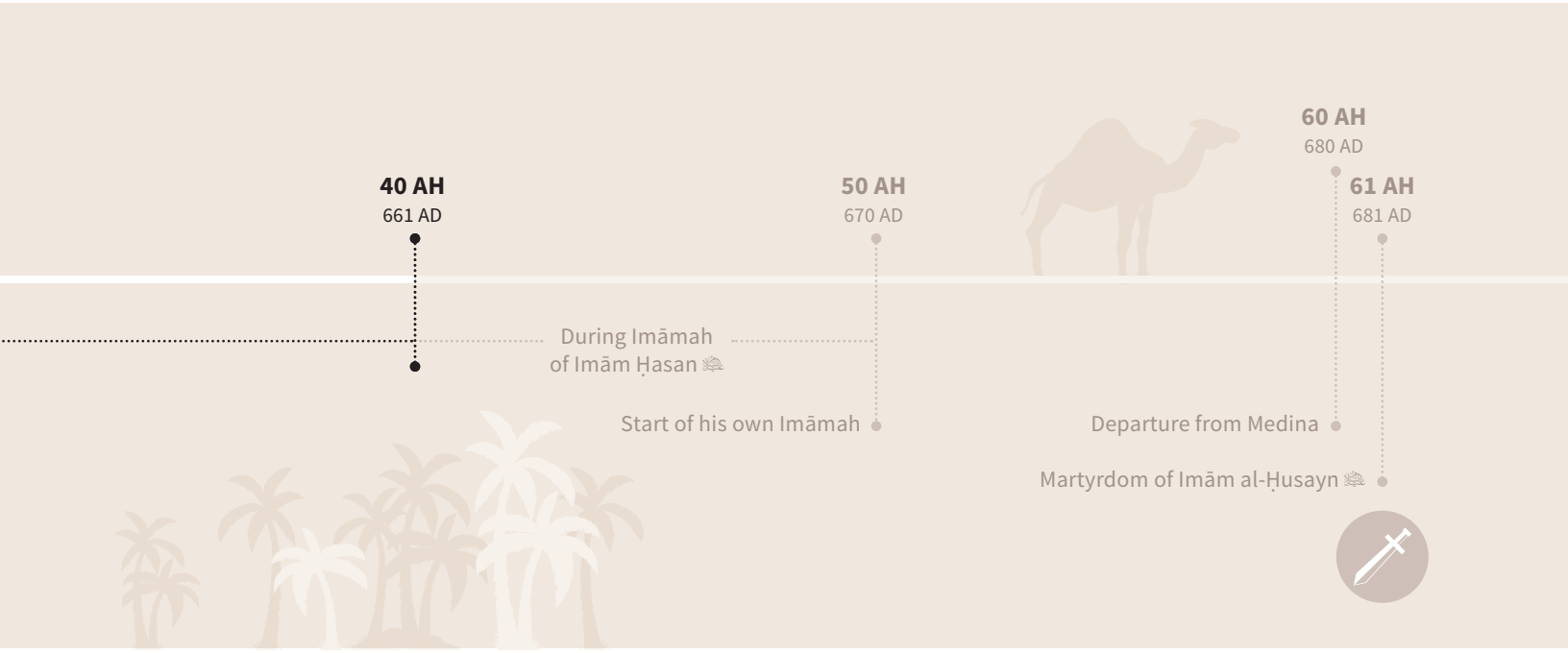
حُسَيْنٌ مِنِّي وَ أَنَا مِنْ حُسَيْنٍ أَحَبَّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ أَحَبَّ حُسَيْنا

"Ḥusayn is from me, and I am from Ḥusayn.
May Allah love the one who loves Ḥusayn." [1]

One day, the Prophet ﷺ put Imām Ḥusayn ؑ on his shoulders and announced: "O people! I know that after me, you are going to have differences. This is Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī! His lineage is the best of lineages; his grandfather is the Prophet, and his grandmother is Khadījah. What has been given to him has not been given to anybody else!" [2]

He made it very clear to the people who this boy was, and how they should treat him. He was even heard saying: "Anyone who wants to know how a youth in Paradise will look like, (they should) look at Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī." [3]

1 Tirmidhī, Muḥammad, *Jāmiʿ at-Tirmidhī,* Vol. 2, P. 306.
2 *Dāneshnāmeh Imām Ḥusayn bar Pāye Qurʾān, Ḥadīth, wa Tārikh* (Encyclopedia of Imām Ḥusayn according to the Qurʾān, Narrations, and History), Vol. 2, P. 21.
3 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 37, P. 75.



RIḤLAH OF THE PROPHET ﷺ TO SHAHĀDAH OF IMĀMʿALĪ ؑ:
28th Ṣafar 11 AH to the 21st of the month of Ramaḍān, 40 AH

In the year 11 AH, on the 28th of Ṣafar, the final Prophet ﷺ passed away. His death was extremely difficult for his family—not only because he was their beloved family member, but he was also their esteemed Prophet ﷺ. For the Immaculate beings *(Maʿsūmīn)* who have deep understanding (*maʿrifah)* about the best person on Earth, meaning the Prophet ﷺ, this was very difficult for them to bear. They could feel the light *(nūr)* and mercy *(raḥmah)* of the Prophet ﷺ leave this Earth.

STOP AND REFLECT: How can we work on attaining a deeper understanding *(maʿrifah)* to gain a better awareness of the Prophet ﷺ and the Imāms ؑ, even though we cannot see them?

After the Prophet ﷺ left this world, his entire family including his grandsons were heartbroken. The oppressive rulers did not allow Sayyidah Fāṭimah ؑ and her family to publicly mourn for the Prophet ﷺ. According to some narrations, due to the magnitude of the loss faced by the Ahlul Bayt ؑ at the loss of the seal of the Prophets and the best creation, Imām ʿAlī ؑ built Sayyidah Fāṭimah ؑ a place called *Bayt al-Aḥzān* in the Baqiʿ Cemetery on the outskirts of Medina so that they could mourn and grieve for their beloved Prophet ﷺ. During the day, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ؑ used to take her children to this shelter, and then Imām ʿAlī ؑ would bring them back home at sunset. According to some reports, after twenty-seven days of her father's demise, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ؑ could not go there anymore due to her illness.[4]

MAʿSŪMĪN: the Immaculate beings

MAʿRIFAH: deep understanding

NŪR: light

RAḤMAH: mercy

STOP AND REFLECT: Why would the rulers of that time prevent the Ahlul Bayt ؑ from outwardly mourning for the Prophet ﷺ?

The rulers were afraid that if the other people heard the family of the Prophet ﷺ crying, their hearts might soften toward them. People might start to recognize who truly had the right to rulership. Thus, they came up with various strategies to prevent the general public from understanding the great status of the Ahlul Bayt ؑ.

These young boys, namely Imām Ḥasan ؑ and Imām Ḥusayn ؑ, and their sisters also had to see the oppression that their parents suffered at the hands of the rulers of that time.

4 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 43, P. 177.

Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ was alongside his brother when their mother, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ, would go to each house in the city and remind the people how they pledged allegiance to Imāmʿ Alī ﷺ during the event of Ghadīr. Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ did anything in his power to help his mother and father stand up to the oppressors of that time, and he would tell the people who their true leaders were.

Soon after the death of their grandfather, the Prophet of Allah ﷺ, their mother, Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ also passed away.

Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ continued to stand up to the oppressors—both publicly and privately. His public resistance to injustice can be seen when he would go to the oppressors' palace and say: "Come down from my father's pulpit!" He was not afraid to stand up for the truth, and placed his complete trust in Allah ﷻ, even in a situation that was dangerous for a child.

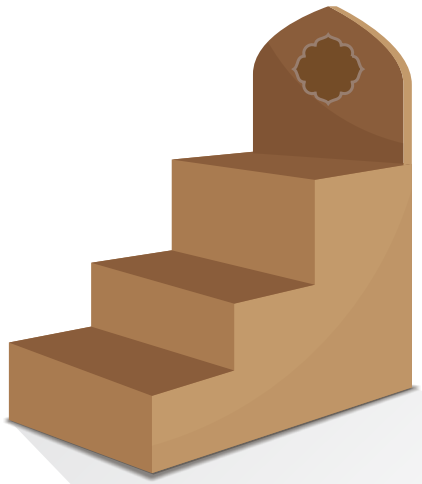
STOP AND REFLECT: If you lived during that time, what are some of the ways in which you might have supported Imām ʿAlī ﷺ?

Throughout the reign of the first three caliphs, Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ would make sure that he spread information about the injustices that the people faced, and would help guide the community to the way of justice and truth. He saw his father's sincere companions being banished away from the city, and would go to visit them even when people warned him about the dangers of doing so, because he knew that they were on the right path.

When Imām ʿAlī ﷺ finally became the caliph and people came to give him allegiance *(bayʿah)*, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ asked both Imām Ḥasan ﷺ and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ to go up to the pulpit *(minbar)* and give a speech.[5]

Then, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ himself went up and addressed the people:

> "O people! These are the grandsons of the Prophet ﷺ! They are his trusts *(amānāt)* that I give to you. O people, know that the Prophet ﷺ has told you about their importance many times!" [6]



BAYʿAH: allegiance

MINBAR: pulpit

AMĀNĀT: trusts

5 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Kitāb at-Tawḥīd*, P. 307.
6 *Kitāb at-Tawḥīd*, P. 308.

Imām Ḥasan ﷺ and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ continued resisting oppression even during their father's leadership. A lot of the oppressors became more vocal as they tried to prevent Imām ʿAlī ﷺ from spreading justice throughout the Islamic world, and they started many civil wars. Both of these young Imāms defended their father in the battles of Jamal, Ṣiffīn, and Nahrawān. During these battles, Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ would stand up and give sermons, reminding the enemy about who Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was, and who they were fighting against.[7]

STOP AND REFLECT: How did these battles show the extreme injustices that the Muslims faced after the death of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ?

NŪRUN WĀḤID: one light

ZIYĀRAH: visitation

RIZQ: sustenance

SAʿĀDAH: true prosperity

SHAHĀDAH OF IMĀMʿALĪ ﷺ TO SHAHĀDAH OF IMĀM ḤASAN ﷺ

As we learned in the previous chapter on the life of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ, the 21st night of the month of Ramaḍān was very difficult for the sons of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ. After burying their father, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ headed to the masjid. There, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ announced his position as the next Imām, and took the oath of allegiance *(bayʿah)* from the people.

When Imām Ḥasan ﷺ decided to sign the peace treaty with Muʿāwiyah, many people actually tried to provoke and persuade Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ to oppose his brother. But Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ knew that his brother had made the right decision, so he told them: "My brother is my Imām." [8]

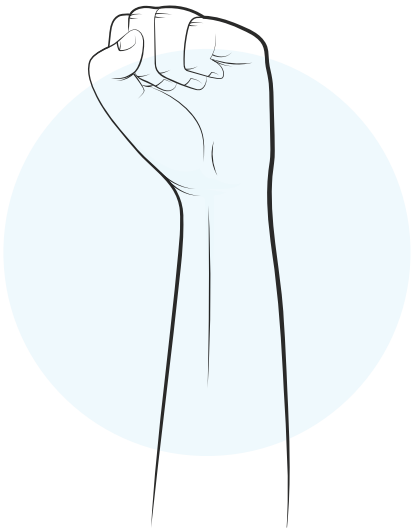
STOP AND REFLECT: What reasons led to Imām Ḥasan's ﷺ decision to make a peace treaty? What factors might influence how we would react to oppression?

1

Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ stood firmly in support of his older brother, as a way of resisting the caliphate of those who were not entitled to have it. He made it clear who the Imām was, and who everyone should turn to for their decisions. He also showed the people that he himself was following the orders of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ. He wanted to convey that *Imāmah* is from Allah ﷻ. The Imāms were all from one light *(nūrun wāḥid)* so all of their decisions were like one person's decisions, since they were in direct accordance with Allah's will.

7 Ibn Abil Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, Vol. 2, P. 186.
8 Al-Kashshī, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, Vol. 1, P. 110.

According to the peace treaty between Imām Ḥasan ﷺ and Muʿāwiyah, Muʿāwiyah was not allowed to appoint a successor. However, he had no intention of abiding by the treaty. He ordered Imām Ḥasan ﷺ to be poisoned, and after killing the second Imām ﷺ, Muʿāwiyah thought he had an open path to do whatever he wished—except for one obstacle: Imām Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ﷺ, who would not allow the religion of his grandfather to be tainted by corrupt, power hungry oppressors.



We can see that Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ did not just stand up to oppression in the desert of Karbalāʾ, but that his whole life was spent in the servitude of Allah ﷻ, which included resistance to injustice throughout his entire life.

STOP AND REFLECT: In what ways was Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ standing up for the people at all times by resisting injustice?

In one of his speeches before departing Mecca to go toward Karbalāʾ, the Imām ﷺ said:

> "I have taken this stand—not out of arrogance or pride, nor out of mischief or injustice. I have risen to seek reformation in the community of my grandfather. I would like to bid good and forbid evil, and follow the tradition of my grandfather, and my father, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib." [9]

The status of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ is so high that it is advised for us to do his visitation *(ziyārah)* frequently. Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said to a companion:

Never set aside the ziyārah of Imām Ḥusayn, and tell your companions to do the same, for if you are able to do that, then Allah will increase your life, and increase your sustenance (rizq), and you will live a life of happiness, and die in a state of happiness, and Allah will consider you to be one who has reached true prosperity (saʿādah). [10]

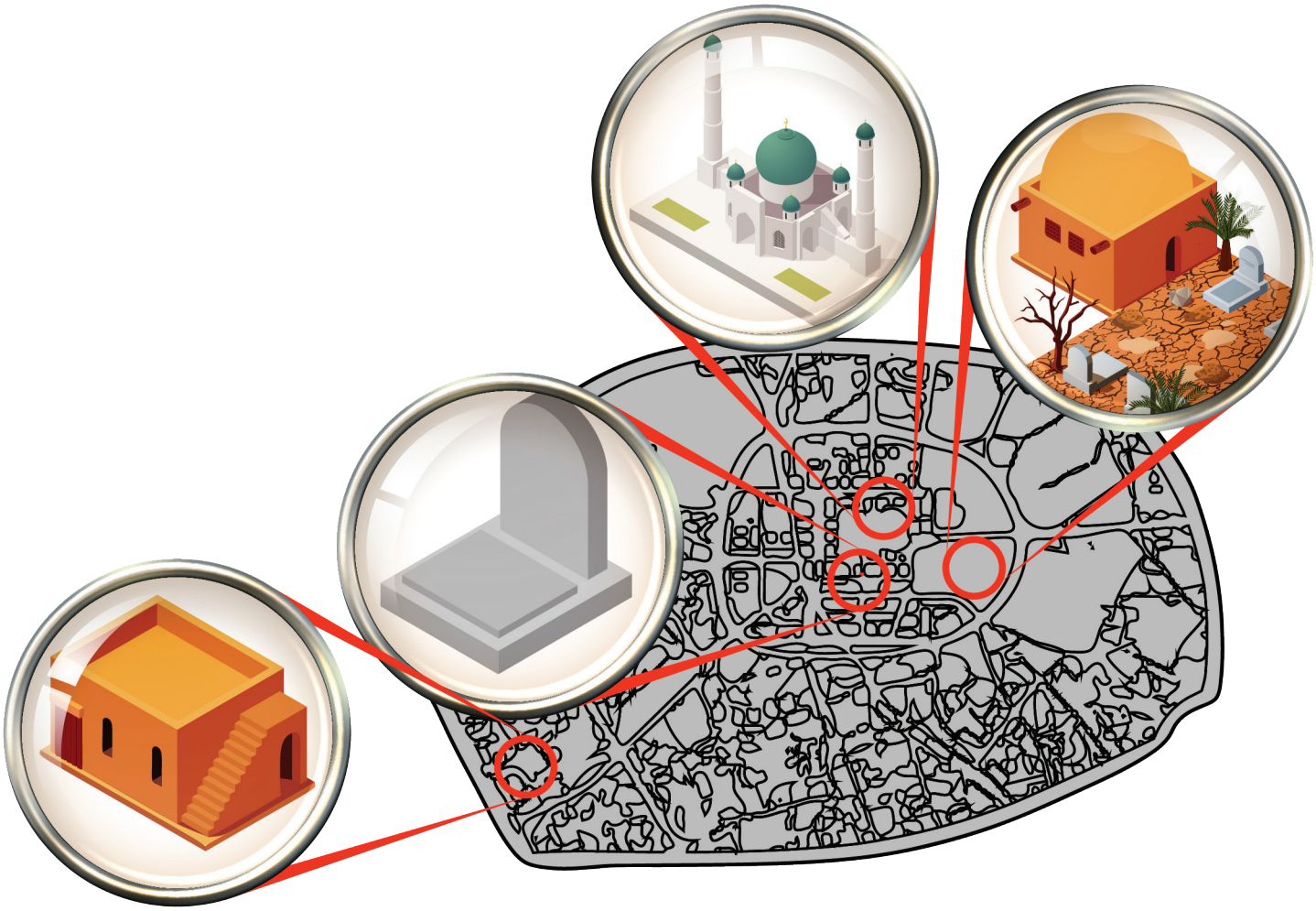
9 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 44, P. 327.
10 Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, *Wasāʾil ash-Shīʿah,* Vol. 14, P. 431.

Activity 2.5a: Locate it!

In this reimagined map of Medina (which is not to scale) we can imagine the routes that our first few Imāms ﷺ might have taken daily.

Identify:

a. Masjid an-Nabawī
b. The house of Imām ʿAli ﷺ
c. The grave of the Noble Prophet ﷺ
d. Jannatul Baqīʿ which may contain the grave of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ
e. Baytul Aḥzān (outside the limits of Medina)



Activity 2.5b: Analyze it!

Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ repeatedly said that he was only uprising to restore the community *(ummah)* of his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah *(Rasūlullāh)* ﷺ. I have risen to establish reformation and correction *(iṣlāḥ)* in the community of my grandfather. [11]

1. Define reform. What does true reform mean?

2. How did the stance of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ to not give allegiance *(bayʿah)* to Yazīd lead to the reform of the Muslim community?

3. What are some of the effects of this reform that we see today?

11 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 44, P. 327.

2.6 Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn's Early Years

OBJECTIVES

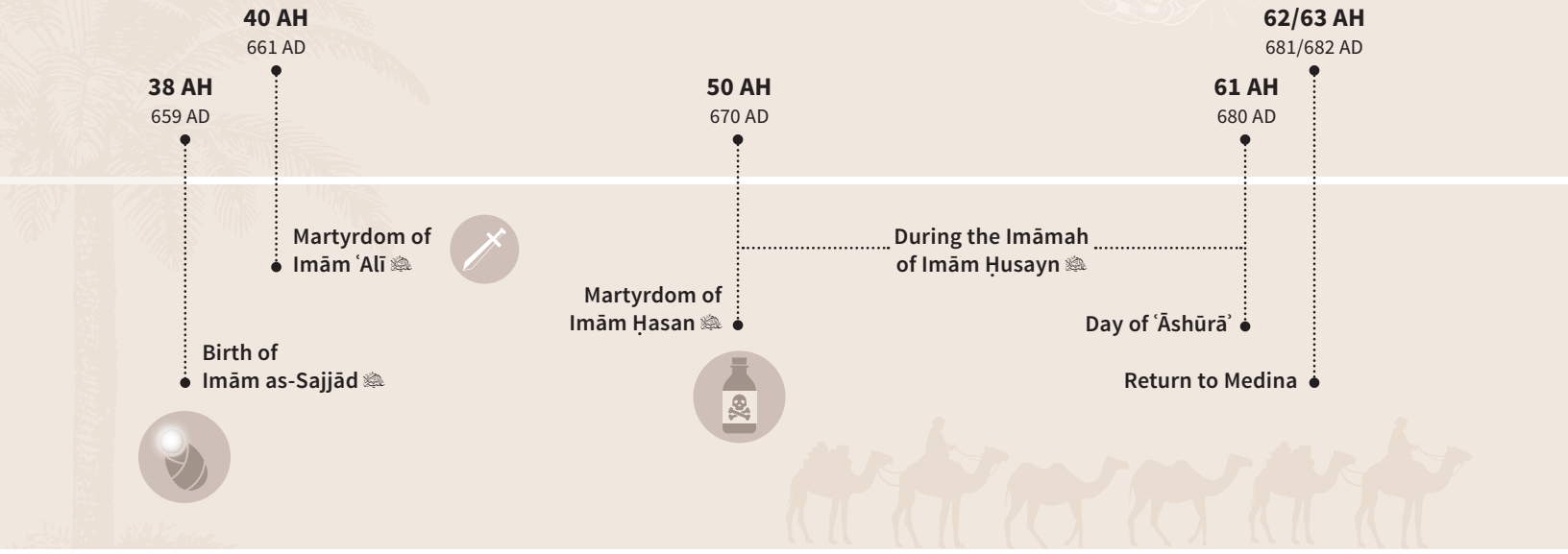
WE WILL:

- Explain how Imām ʿAlī Zaynul ʿĀbidīn as-Sajjād ﷺ was named.
- Compare the similarities between Prophet ʿĪsā and Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ as babies.
- Review Imām as-Sajjād's ﷺ experiences in the lives of each of the Imāms ﷺ prior to him.
- Describe the beautiful worship of Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ in his obligatory *(wājib)* and recommended *(mustaḥab)* actions; and then connect this to our own lives.

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD ﷺ

Name	ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ﷺ
Kunyah	Abū Muḥammad, Abul Ḥasan
Title	As-Sajjād, Zaynul ʿĀbidīn
Parents	Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ and Lady Shahrbānū
Date of Birth	5th of Shaʿbān 38 AH
Birthplace	Kūfah, Iraq (or Medina according to some narrations)
Duration of Imāmah	34 years
Date of Martyrdom	25th of Muḥarram 95 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Medina, Arabia
Cause of Martyrdom	Poisoned by Walīd ibn ʿAbdul Malik
Lifespan	57 years
Location of Grave	Jannatul Baqīʿ in Medina, Arabia

TIMELINE OF IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD ﷺ



BIRTH TO SHAHĀDAH OF IMĀM ʿALĪ ﷺ:
5th Shaʿbān 38 AH to the 21st of the month of Ramaḍān, 40 AH (2 years)

Imām ʿAlī as-Sajjād ﷺ was born on Thursday, the 5th of Shaʿbān, 38 years after the migration *(Hijrah)*. His parents were Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ and Lady Shahrbānū, who was the daughter of a Persian king. The Imām ﷺ was born during the period of Imām ʿAlī's caliphate *(khilāfah)*.

It has been narrated from Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī that:

I was sitting with the Messenger of Allah, when he placed al-Ḥusayn on his lap and was playing with him. Then he (the Prophet) said: 'O Jābir! A son will be born through him, and that son will be named ʿAlī. A caller will call out on the Day of Judgment: 'Let Sayyid al-ʿĀbidīn (the Chief of Worshipers) stand up,' then, his son will stand up.' [1]

When Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was born, his grandfather, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ, recited the *adhān* in his right ear and *iqāmah* in his left ear. Seven days after his birth, his father, Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ cut his hair, sacrificed a sheep, and gave silver equal to its weight as charity to the needy, which is referred to as an *ʿaqīqah* according to the tradition *(sunnah)* of the Prophet ﷺ.

IMĀMAH OF IMĀM ḤASAN ﷺ

During the *Imāmah* of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ, Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was just a young child. Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ saw first-hand the difficulties that his uncle, Imām Ḥasan ﷺ, experienced. He saw that the unjust rulers of the time imposed restrictions on his uncle and his father, and how badly the Muslims of the time treated his uncle.

Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ spent time with his uncle as a child. He observed how his uncle worshiped Allah ﷻ, and how he would weep when he remembered or thought about death, being placed in the grave, and when there would be talk about the resurrection. He noticed that when his uncle would stand for the prayers, his entire body would shake out of fear, reverence, and awe of Allah ﷻ.

1 Ḥaḍramī Shāfiʿī, Shahāb ad-Dīn Aḥmad, *Wasīlat al-Māl fi ʿAdd Manāqib al-Āl*, P. 7.

95 AH
713 AD

Martyrdom of Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ

WISH OF IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD ﷺ

One time during his childhood, our 4th Imām, Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ became very ill. Imām Husayn ﷺ came into the room that he was laying down in, hugged him and kissed him, then asked: "How are you feeling, my son? Is there anything you wish to have that I can bring for you?"

Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ responded to his father:

"I only have one wish and that is for Allah ﷻ to place me amongst those who are ever-pleased and satisfied with whatever He decrees for them."

Hearing these beautiful words, his father hugged him and said: "You have indeed spoken words of deep knowledge *(maʿrifah)*. Your answer is similar to that of Prophet Ibrāhīm when he was thrown into the fire (by Namrūd), and Angel Jibrāʾīl met him and asked him if he had any wishes, to which Prophet Ibrāhīm replied: 'Indeed I do, but not from you!'" [2]

STOP AND REFLECT: How were these two wishes of Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ and Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ similar?

Even at such a young age, the Imām ﷺ knew how to ask for a beautiful prayer *(duʿāʾ)*!

Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was about 12 years old when he witnessed the martyrdom *(shahādah)* of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ. This was the peak of Muʿāwiyah's power, and times were tough for the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ in Medina. His uncle's body was shot with arrows when they tried to bury it near the grave of the Prophet ﷺ. Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ witnessed this, and he stood by Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ and helped in whatever capacity he could.

2 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *ʿIlal ash-Sharāʾiʿ*, Pp. 23-24.

DURING THE IMĀMAH OF IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ:
28th Ṣafar 50 AH to 10th Muḥarram 61 AH (11 years)

Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was approximately 23 years old when he accompanied his father to Karbalāʾ. Until the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, or perhaps a couple of days earlier, Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was perfectly healthy, preparing for battle alongside his brothers. He was ready to sacrifice his life and stand up to the unjust rulers of the time to save Islam. However, Allah ﷻ knew that *Imāmah* needed to be preserved through him.

It was part of a Divine plan that Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ became extremely ill on the night before ʿĀshūrāʾ and could not participate in the battle the next day. This was the way that Allah ﷻ, out of His infinite wisdom, wished to preserve the lineage of the 12 Imāms ﷺ. Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was so sick that he could not even get out of the cot that he lay on in his tent.

On the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, after the last companion and family member had given up their lives for Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, the only two adult males which remained in that camp were the two Imāms ﷺ. When it came time for Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ to depart to the battlefield for the last battle, he went into the tent of Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ to pass on the position of *Imāmah* to him. During the battle, when Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ called out for help, Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ tried his best to get up so he could go to his father's assistance. He stood up while he was shaking intensely, and dragging his sword like a cane, came out of the tent. But according to some reports, his father commanded Umm Kulthūm: "Restrain him! Otherwise, there will be no one from the family of Muḥammad left on this Earth!" [3]

After the martyrdom of his father, the role of *Imāmah* transferred to Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ at the age of 22. After the day of ʿAshūrāʾ, the families of the Caravan (including the Banī Hāshim and companions) were taken as captives. Throughout the difficulties that the women and children of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ faced after the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was the pillar of support for all of them. In the journey to Kūfah and Shām, the Imām ﷺ gave strong speeches in which he utterly humiliated the Banī Umayyah, waking up the people, and informing them about the crimes that had occurred in Karbalāʾ.

THE TITLE "AS-SAJJĀD"

Our fourth Imām ﷺ earned a beautiful title from Allah ﷻ that he is commonly known by.

Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ narrates:

My father, ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ﷺ, would go into prostration (perform sajdah) whenever he remembered a favor of Allah ﷻ. He would do sajdah whenever he would recite a verse (āyah) from the book of Allah ﷻ that contained sajdah in it. Whenever Allah ﷻ would repel any evil from him that he was afraid of, or the plotting of any corrupt person, he would go into sajdah. Whenever he would finish any obligatory prayer, he would do sajdah. Whenever he was successful in reconciling two people, he would do sajdah. There was a mark of sajdah on all of the places of his body that touched the ground during the position of sajdah. Hence, he became known as: As-Sajjād. [4]

STOP AND REFLECT: Identify some of the aspects of your life in which you can incorporate the worship of Allah ﷻ into your routine to emulate Imām as-Sajjād's worship. Remember to start with the obligatory things (the *wājibāt)*!

3 Māzindarānī, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī, *Maʿālī as-Sibṭayn,* Vol. 2, Pp. 20-21.
4 *ʿIlal ash-Sharāʾiʿ*, Vol. 1, P. 233.

Activity 2.6a: Review Questions

1. In the beginning of this lesson, we saw that the Prophet of Allah *(Rasūlullāh)* ﷺ told his companion, Jābir, the name of the 4th Imām ؑ. Recall who Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī was. Why is this *ḥadīth* significant?

2. How old was Imām as-Sajjād ؑ when his grandfather, Imām ʿAlī ؑ, was martyred? Would he have been old enough to see the injustices that his grandfather faced?

3. What are the two most famous titles of Imām ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ؑ ? How are these two related? What is the difference between the two?

Activity 2.6b: A Personal Duʿāʾ

Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādīyyah

The book, *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-Sajjādiyyah*, can be found here:
www.al-islam.org/sahifa-al-kamilah-al-sajjadiyya-imam-ali-zayn-al-abidin/

Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-Sajjādiyyah is a collection of supplications (*duʿās)* and whispered prayers *(munājāt)* taught by Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ, and we see that the Imām begins the prayers with the praise of Allah ﷻ, followed by praise of His Messenger ﷺ, and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ.

In the following *duʿās*, we see that the Imām ﷺ often uses this similar pattern to make *duʿāʾ;* and it is also one of the recommended acts to start our supplications with *Bismillāh* and *Ṣalawāt*.

A translator of the *Ṣaḥīfah* says:

> *In the Ṣaḥīfah, we see Islamic spirituality—or that dimension of the religion of Islam which deals with the practical and lived reality of the personal relationship between human beings and God—expressed in the most universal of languages, that of the concrete and intimate yearning of the soul for completion and perfection.*[5]

1. What do you think this means? Show evidence from some of the *duʿās* to back your understanding.

2. After reflecting on this statement, write a personal *duʿāʾ* around one specific thing you would like to ask Allah ﷻ for, perhaps using some of the words from the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ as an inspiration.

5 *Translator's introduction*. Al-Islam. (2013, January 27). Retrieved November 14, 2022, from https://www.al-islam.org/sahifa-al-kamilah-al-sajjadiyya-imam-ali-zayn-al-abidin/translators-introduction

2.7 Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ in Shām

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Develop strategies to understand the dark period in the history of Shīʿahs that the 4th Imām ﷺ had to live through.
- Analyze the speech of the Imām ﷺ that he gave in between the *adhān* in the court of Yazīd.
- Understand the importance of the leadership style of the Imām ﷺ, and how it was necessary for the people of his time.

FROM THE DAY OF ʿĀSHŪRĀʾ TO THEIR RETURN TO MEDINA:
10th Muḥarram 61 AH to 62/63 AH

No Imām ﷺ began his *Imāmah* in a more tragic atmosphere than the 4th Imām ﷺ. On the first day of his *Imāmah*, he was seriously ill and was taken as a captive by the army of Yazīd in Karbalāʾ. His father and other family members had all sacrificed themselves and everything they had for the Truth.

Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ found himself with a group of widows and orphans being forced to march from place to place. They were thrown into a prison, where the Imām spent the first portion of his *Imāmah*, cut off from the entire community. Understandably, the tragedy of Karbalāʾ created chaos in the Shīʿah world. The Shīʿahs were in a time of darkness, and the community was in confusion.

Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ had three difficult tasks before him:

- To announce his *Imāmah* publicly
- To unite the community, and prevent Yazīd from dividing them further
- To expand the faith of the believers *(muʾminīn)* without attracting the attention of the enemies

Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ, under Divine guidance, achieved all of these aims in a beautiful way. His legacy is alive even until now in the *duʿās* and *ḥadīth* we have from him today.

FROM KŪFAH TO SHĀM

From Kūfah, the captives were taken to Shām (Damascus). Perhaps it was on this journey that Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ recited a supplication which eventually became known as Duʿāʾ #8 from *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah As-Sajjādiyyah,* "His Prayer for Seeking Refuge from Hateful Things."

Recitation of this *duʿāʾ*, and other pearls of wisdom that came from the Imām's blessed tongue, would catch the attention of those around him. His supplications discussed spiritual diseases such as arrogance, jealousy, and greed. He wanted to awaken the people and help them realize that their deception was rooted in diseases of the soul.

When the caravan reached an area near Shām, the army made them stop. Yazīd wanted to decorate the city to show their joy in the 'victory' over the grandson of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ. When the city was fully decorated, the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ were paraded through the streets of Shām, and people celebrated the death of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ.

Unfortunately, the Banī Umayyah had spread so much propaganda and false rumors that the people were convinced that these captives were blameworthy and deserved being prisoners.

STOP AND REFLECT: List three ways in which news spreads in our day and age; and then list the ways in which misinformation can be spread.

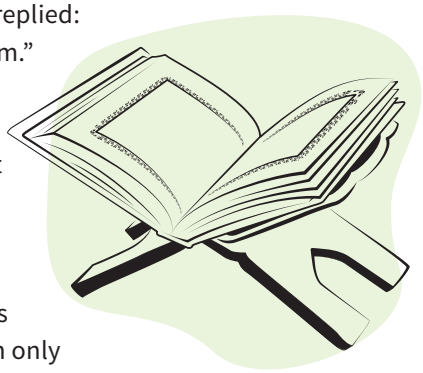
One elderly man approached Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ and unknowingly said to him: "All praise is for Allah ﷻ who destroyed you and granted the governor power over you."

The Imām ﷺ knew that this man had been deceived by the propaganda and people around him, so the Imām ﷺ asked him: "Respected elder, have you read the Qurʾān?"

The man answered: "Yes, of course I have!"

The Imām ﷺ continued: "Have you read the verse that says: 'Say: I do not ask from you any reward for it except love of my close ones;' and the verse which says: 'And give the [Prophet's] relatives their [due] right;' and the verse that says: 'Know that whatever thing you may come by, a fifth of it is for Allah and the Messenger, and for the relatives [of the Prophet].'"

The elderly Syrian faintly replied: "Yes, I have read all of them."



The Imām ﷺ then told him: "I swear by Allah that **we** are the relatives and kinsfolk referred to in all of these verses. Shaykh[1], have you read these words of Allah, the exalted: 'Allah only desires to keep away impurity from you, O Household (of the Prophet), and purify you with a thorough purification?'" [2]

Again, the man answered: "Yes."

The Imām ﷺ continued: "We are the Household (of the Prophet) whom Allah favored with this Verse of Purification."

By this point, the elderly man was shaking. *O how I wish that the earth had swallowed me up before I said my words,* he thought to himself. He asked the Imām ﷺ: "By Allah, are you really those people?"

"I swear by our grandfather, the Prophet of Allah *(Rasūlullāh)*, that we are—without any doubt," replied the Imām ﷺ.

Hearing the Imām's ﷺ reply, the man fell to his knees and began kissing Imām as-Sajjād's hands. With tears in his eyes, he declared: "I dissociate myself before Allah from those who killed you!"

He asked the Imām ﷺ for forgiveness, and the Imām ﷺ immediately forgave the man.[3]

It was through his manners *(akhlāq)* and reminders to the people that the Imām ﷺ managed to bring them out of their heedlessness *(ghaflah),* and awaken them, and help them realize who they were.

STOP AND REFLECT: Is implementing good treatment of others *(adab)* part of your responsibility when you are trying to advise them? Are there times in which you would need to dissociate yourself from others instead of advising them?

Even though he was taken through the city in chains, Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ took every opportunity to remind the people about the status of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. Whenever he was given a chance, he would speak bravely and eloquently. He demonstrated courageousness and standing up to the oppressors through dissociation with them. He continued to remind the people of justice, and encouraged them to worship Allah ﷻ in the right way. This was his duty as the Imām, because he knew what was right and what his responsibilities were.

1 *Shaykh* in this instance is referring to an elderly man as this was the norm in those days.
2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Aḥzāb (33), Verse 33.
3 Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Al-Luhūf,* P. 177.

SPEECH IN THE COURT OF YAZĪD

Perhaps one of the most powerful speeches given by Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was in the court of Yazīd in Shām. Yazīd had invited so many people to his palace, including important nobles, to celebrate his victory over the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. Once the court was full of people, he ordered a speaker to ascend the pulpit and curse Imām ʿAlī ﷺ and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, and praise Muʿāwiyah and Yazīd. As the man was spouting these lies, Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ interrupted him and said: "Woe unto you! You have traded the pleasure of the creation for the wrath of the Creator, so take your place in the fire of Hell!"

The Imām ﷺ then turned to Yazīd and asked for permission to sit on some of the pieces of wood, and deliver a speech that would bring rewards for everyone present. Those in attendance were shocked at this prisoner who was also sick, and how he dared to interrupt the gathering. Of course, Yazīd refused his request to speak, but the people insisted.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why do you think the Imām said he wanted to sit on the pieces of wood instead of referring to it as a minbar?

The people were confused and asked Yazīd: "What can this sick man do to you?" They did not know who the Imām ﷺ was. The people kept pressuring Yazīd, so he had no choice but to allow the Imām ﷺ to deliver his talk.

The Imām ﷺ sat on the pile of woods, indicating that even a minbar can lose its function if it is not used properly in the way of obedience of the chosen ones of Allah (under the *wilāyah)*, and began speaking and delivering one of the most eloquent speeches in all of history: one that moved the entire crowd to tears. The Imām ﷺ began by introducing himself and his family, and reminding the people that the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ were sent as Divine guides to all of humanity.

He said: "Whoever recognizes me, knows me; but whoever does not recognize me, let me introduce myself and the family to which I belong…" Then he continued in this manner: describing himself, his grandfathers the Prophet of Allah ﷺ and Imām ʿAlī ﷺ, and then finally mentioning the tragedy of Karbalāʾ until the people were weeping uncontrollably.

Yazīd was sweating in his seat, thinking that the people would revolt against him. After all, the Imām ﷺ explained to the Syrians all about himself and his family, igniting a cultural revolution. Yazīd quickly ordered the *muʾadhin* to recite the *adhān so as* to distract the people.[4]

The *muʾadhin* right away began to recite: *"Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar!"*

The Imām ﷺ turned to him and said: "You have made great the One Who cannot be measured or felt by senses; and there is nothing greater than Allah ﷻ."

The *muʾadhin* continued: *"Ashhadu an-lā ilāha illallāh!"*

The Imām ﷺ then said: "My hair, skin, flesh, blood, brain, and bones bear witness that there is no god except Allah ﷻ."

The *muʾadhin* went on: *"Ashhadu anna Muḥammadan Rasūlullāh!"*

At this point, the Imām ﷺ turned to Yazīd and asked him: "O Yazīd, is Muḥammad your grandfather or mine? If you say that he is yours, then you are a liar; and if you say that he is mine, then why did you kill his family?" [5]

Yazīd was speechless and dumbfounded. The Imām's grandfather was the Prophet of Allah ﷺ, whereas Yazīd's grandfather was Abū Sufyān, the enemy of the Prophet ﷺ and Allah ﷻ.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why do you think the Imām ﷺ focused his speech on identifying who he was? What was the effect of this?

The Imām's speech had a massive effect on the Syrians. They left the gathering feeling they had been misled by the Banī Umayyah, and guilty about their transgressions. They began spreading the word about the Umayyad propaganda, and people's attitudes toward Yazīd quickly began to change and became more negative.

4 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 45, P. 138.
5 Al-Qummī, Shaykh ʿAbbās, *Nafas al-Mahmūm*, P. 262.

THE AHLUL BAYT ﷺ ARE FINALLY FREED

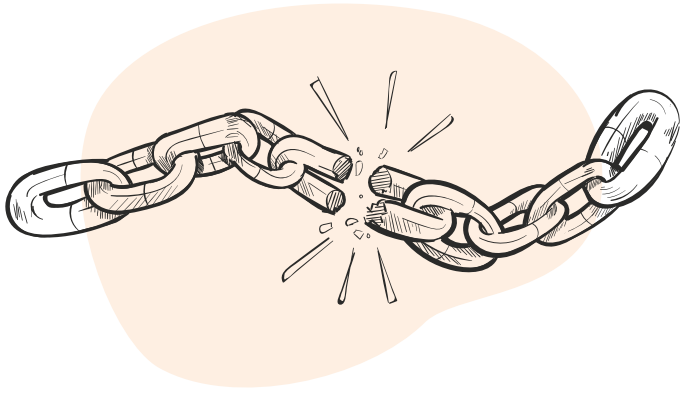
Soon, the Syrians became extremely restless and resentful toward Yazīd, so he knew that he had to amend the situation right away. Therefore, he summoned Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ and apologized to him so that the people would think that Yazīd was not at fault. He then shifted the blame for Imām Ḥusayn's death to Ibn Ziyād[6] and said: "May Allah curse Ibn Ziyād! I swear by Allah that if I had been with Ḥusayn, he never would have asked me for a favor without me granting it to him! I would have protected him from death with all of my power, even if I had to sacrifice my own children!"[7] He then told the Imām ﷺ that he could ask for anything he wanted. The Imām ﷺ knew that his apology was insincere and he was just trying to save face and himself, so he turned away and did not answer him.

Again, Yazīd called Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ and told him to ask for whatever he wanted. So, the Imām ﷺ replied: "I want my father's head back, and I want you to return to us whatever you plundered. If you want to kill me, then send someone to take my family back to Medina."

Yazīd bowed his head and thought about the Imām's requests. Then, he raised his head up and replied: "As for the face of your father, you will never see it. As for what was taken from you, it will be brought back to you. As for the women, no one will return with them except you; and as for you, I will not kill you."[8]

Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ and his family demanded that the heads be given back, and since Yazīd was at a loss due to the pressures around him, he realized that he had no choice left and had to comply with the Imām's request.

Yazīd ordered Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr to escort Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ and the women back to Medina. According to some reports, the women asked Nuʿmān to take them first to Karbalāʾ so they could perform the visitation *(ziyārah)* of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ and the martyrs of Karbalāʾ. They remained there to mourn for three days before finally heading back to their hometown of Medina.



THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF THE IMĀM ﷺ

Sorrow and grief can often succeed in bringing people together. At the time of a tragedy, everyone unites to share the sorrow, and shoulder the resulting responsibilities. Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ used this method to unite the community when he was freed from prison.

It is said that he continued to weep until his eyes became very weak. Whenever he would take a cup to drink some water, the water would become mixed with his tears.[9] When he asked about this, he replied:

> "Why should I not cry, when my father was denied water which was free for the beasts and animals even to drink?" [10]

The Imām ﷺ lived during a period of brutal caliphs, each one trying to outdo the previous one in their brutality to the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ used his tears and supplications to Allah ﷻ in order to teach his followers, especially since the caliphs limited him from preaching.

The Imām ﷺ was martyred at the age of 57, on the 25th of Muharram in the year 95 AH. He was poisoned by the caliph, Walīd ibn ʿAbdul Malik, who was instigated to commit this crime by his brother, Hishām. When the Imām ﷺ passed away the sounds of crying and wailing were heard across the city of Medina. Men and women, young and old, free ones and the slaves—everyone was in a state of mourning. Pious people and sinners alike attended his funeral. He was laid to rest in the Baqīʿ Cemetery, next to his uncle Imām Ḥasan ﷺ.

6 Ibn al-Jawzī, Sibṭ, *Tazkirat al-Khawāṣṣ*, Pp. 261 and 265.
7 Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, *Tārīkh aṭ-Ṭabarī*, Vol. 5, P. 506.
8 *Al-Luhūf,* Vol. 1, P. 174.
9 *Al-Luhūf,* Vol.1, P. 121.
10 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 45, P. 149.

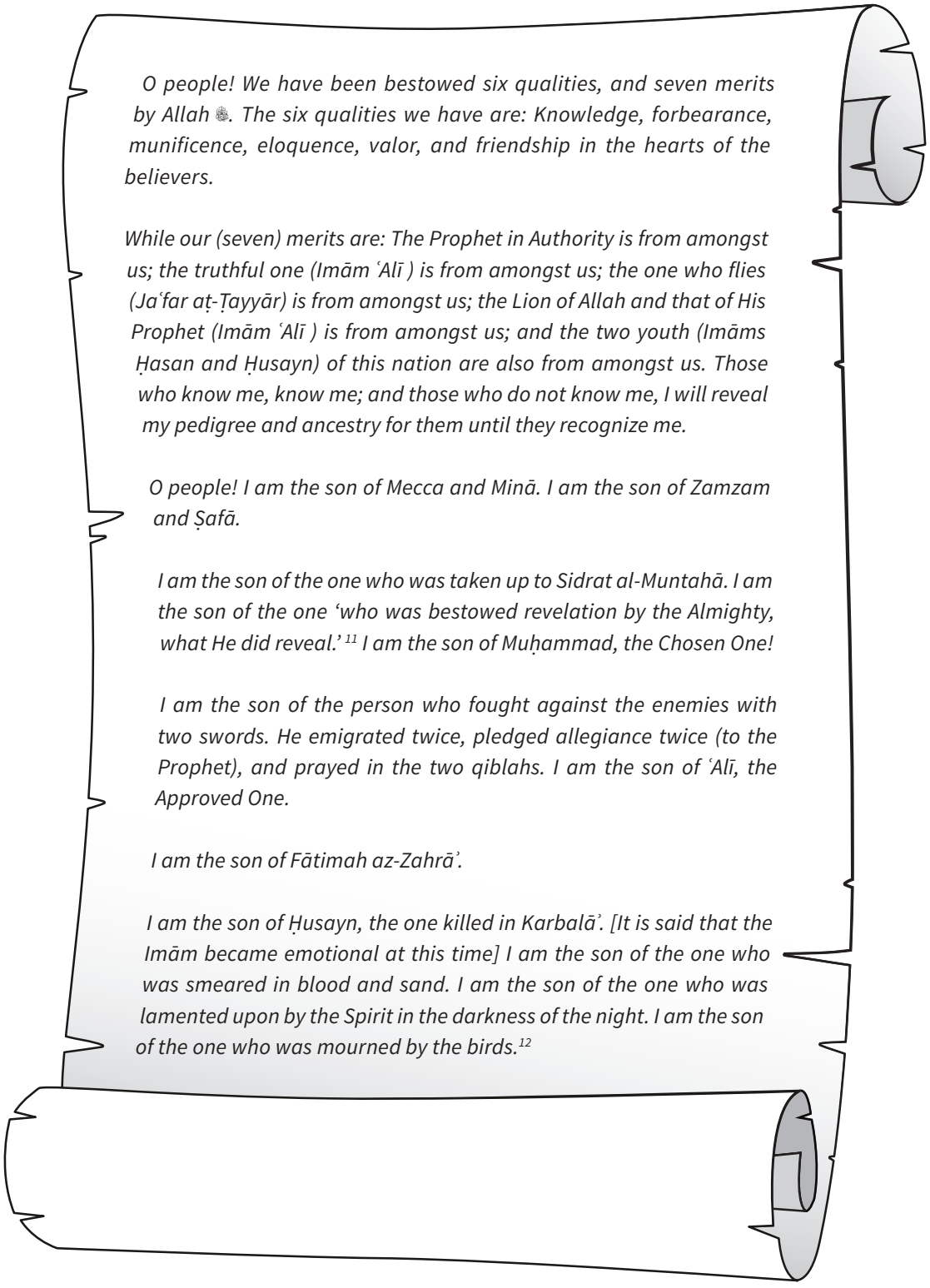
Activity 2.7a: Comic Strip

Use the space below to illustrate one of the following events mentioned in this lesson:

1. Conversation with the elderly man in Damascus.
2. The speech of the Imām ﷺ in the courtyard of Yazīd.
3. Imām as-Sajjād's conversation with Yazīd when the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ were freed.

Activity 2.7b: Worksheet

In this lesson, we briefly referenced the speech that Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ made in the court of Yazīd. Here is an extended version of this speech:



O people! We have been bestowed six qualities, and seven merits by Allah ﷻ. The six qualities we have are: Knowledge, forbearance, munificence, eloquence, valor, and friendship in the hearts of the believers.

While our (seven) merits are: The Prophet in Authority is from amongst us; the truthful one (Imām ʿAlī) is from amongst us; the one who flies (Jaʿfar aṭ-Ṭayyār) is from amongst us; the Lion of Allah and that of His Prophet (Imām ʿAlī) is from amongst us; and the two youth (Imāms Ḥasan and Ḥusayn) of this nation are also from amongst us. Those who know me, know me; and those who do not know me, I will reveal my pedigree and ancestry for them until they recognize me.

O people! I am the son of Mecca and Minā. I am the son of Zamzam and Ṣafā.

I am the son of the one who was taken up to Sidrat al-Muntahā. I am the son of the one 'who was bestowed revelation by the Almighty, what He did reveal.' [11] *I am the son of Muḥammad, the Chosen One!*

I am the son of the person who fought against the enemies with two swords. He emigrated twice, pledged allegiance twice (to the Prophet), and prayed in the two qiblahs. I am the son of ʿAlī, the Approved One.

I am the son of Fātimah az-Zahrāʾ.

I am the son of Ḥusayn, the one killed in Karbalāʾ. [It is said that the Imām became emotional at this time] I am the son of the one who was smeared in blood and sand. I am the son of the one who was lamented upon by the Spirit in the darkness of the night. I am the son of the one who was mourned by the birds.[12]

11 See Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah an-Najm (53), Verses 1-18 which describe this miraculous event.

12 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 45, P. 138.

Activity 2.7b: Worksheet (Continued)

1. Let us take apart some of the lessons in this speech. What could the aim of the Imām ﷺ be in praising the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ so much?

2. Recall how we have talked about self-confidence and arrogance. How can we explain that this speech is not a show of arrogance from the Imām ﷺ?

3. Why did Yazīd consider it necessary to stop the speech here, when the Imām ﷺ had just begun describing his family?

4. Do you think there were any people who were not affected by this speech? If so, then why?

2.8 Imām ʿAlī as-Sajjād ﷺ: Reforming Hearts

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Describe the atmosphere in Medina when Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ returned after the martyrdom *(shahādah)* of his father, Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ.
- Analyze the sociopolitical purposes behind Imām as-Sajjād's supplications *(duʿās)*.
- Outline ways in which the Imām ﷺ remained steadfast and patient despite the multiple unjust rulers of his time.
- Describe the legacy of Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ.

RETURN TO MEDINA UNTIL HIS OWN MARTYRDOM:
2nd Rabīʿ al-Awwal 62 AH to 25th Muḥarram 95 AH

When Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ and the caravan approached Medina, he set up a tent for the women. Then, the Imām ﷺ turned to a man named Bashīr ibn Hadhlam, whose father was a famous poet, and asked him to enter Medina and announce the death of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ ahead of the caravan. Bashīr went near the Masjid an-Nabī where he loudly cried out:

O people of Medina! May you never stay therein!
Ḥusayn was killed, so let the tears now rain,
His body is in Karbalāʾ, all blood-stained!
While his head is on a spear, for all displayed.

Hearing this, the people began to cry out loudly and gathered around Bashīr, asking him for more information. He announced: "Here is ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, accompanied by his aunts and sisters; they have all returned to you. I am his messenger to inform you about where he is." [1]

The people went out to welcome the Imām ﷺ and his caravan, all the while crying and wailing, offering their condolences.

IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD'S STRUGGLES IN MEDINA

Even though our Imāms ﷺ were present, there were always those who sought to keep power for themselves and away from the Imāms ﷺ, because they knew that they would not get special privileges if the Imāms ﷺ lead the people with justice. Although people commonly think that Imām as-Sajjād's problems ended when he returned to Medina, the city of his grandfather, the era of oppression continued until his own martyrdom.

There were many people in the city who abandoned the Imām ﷺ out of fear of being associated with him, and out of a desire to be closer to the governing leadership. Even some of the people who used to love the Imām ﷺ before he went to Karbalāʾ were now hiding their love for him. During this time, the Imām ﷺ said: "In Mecca and Medina, there are not even 20 people who love us, the Ahlul Bayt." [2]

According to some scholars and historical narrations, for some years after returning to Medina, Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ used to live in a black tent in the desert outside of the city. He did this because he did not want to be in contact with the people who had been disloyal to him. From the desert, the Imām ﷺ would secretly go to perform the visitation *(ziyārah)* of his father and grandfather in Iraq. Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was not even allowed in the Prophet's Masjid and would sit outside by the shoes.

1 Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Al-Luhūf,* P. 115.
2 Ibn Abil Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, Vol. 4, P. 104.

IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD'S SUPPLICATIONS (DUʿĀS)

One of the primary methods that Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ used to bring people to the path of true Islam was to spread the pure teachings in the form of supplications *(duʿās)*, whispered prayers, and advice.

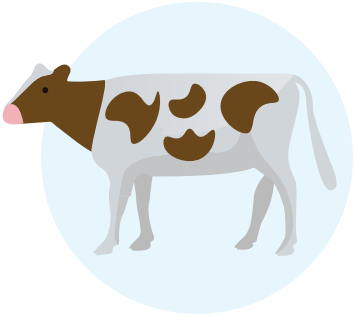
For example, in a manner that would not be seen as political, he would talk about the concept of Imamate *(Imāmah)*. He introduced *Imāmah* as a fundamental Islamic belief that all Muslims will be questioned about in their graves.

This made people think: *Who really are the Imāms ﷺ in our time? Can the Banū Umayyah be the true and Divinely-appointed Imāms?!* Similarly the famous compilation of his supplications and whispered prayers in the book entitled, *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-Sajjādiyyah,* is full of Islamic teachings with regards to beliefs, culture, society, politics, as well as practical rulings—all passed on through the unique method of supplications. This book is one of the greatest treasures that we have today.

There are supplications for all different topics and issues, such as the rights of parents, children, and neighbors; for when you are in a difficult situation, have a worrisome task, engulfed in sorrows, or sickness. These *duʿās* can help us in every situation in our lives, and shape our hearts as well. It was through these *duʿās* that Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ would preach to and teach the people. His supplications were full of important messages about ethics and morals *(akhlāq)*, courage, knowledge, Monotheism *(Tawḥīd)*, and so much more.

STOP AND REFLECT: How can prayers and supplications change and refine the state of people's hearts?

The governor at the time could not stop him because he was reciting supplications, but through these powerful *duʿās*, he was able to spread the teachings of Islam and slowly shape the hearts of the people. This was how he laid the foundations that allowed the people to start understanding Islam better, and become students of the Imāms ﷺ after him, like Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ and Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ.



SPREADING AWARENESS OF ʿĀSHŪRĀʾ

The Imām ﷺ would also do everything in his power to educate the people about the events of Karbalāʾ. He knew that the key to keeping Islam alive was to remind others about the sacrifice of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ and the oppression that he and his family underwent. For example, whenever he would pass through the meat market and saw a butcher ready to slaughter an animal, he would ask them: "What are you doing?"

The butcher would reply: "I am about to slaughter this animal."

The Imām ﷺ would tell them: "Make sure you give it some water! My father was slaughtered without any water!" [3]

Hearing this, people would become intrigued and want to know more about what had transpired.

3 Al-Kāshī, ʿAbdul Wahhāb, *Maʾsāt al-Ḥusayn baynas-Sāʾil wal-Mujīb*, P. 182.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why is reminding people about Karbalāʾ the key to keeping Islam alive?

The caliphate at that time had made it forbidden *(ḥarām)* to mourn and commemorate the sacrifice of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, so the 4th Imām ﷺ would hold secret gatherings *(majālis)* during the time of *Ḥajj*—underground and in abandoned locations. After seven years, due to the political disputes that were happening, the caliphs shifted their focus away from him.

After Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ returned to Medina and word spread about the events of Karbalāʾ, many people were outraged at Yazīd's blatant oppression. Rebellions began springing up all over the Muslim world, as people attempted to oust Yazīd out of power.

REBELLION IN MEDINA

When the news about Imām Ḥusayn's martyrdom *(shahādah)* reached the people of Medina, they were infuriated. As a result, the governor of Medina decided to send some nobles to Shām to meet with Yazīd. He was hoping that Yazīd would bribe them to calm them down. However, when they saw Yazīd up close—his drinking, gambling, and other bad habits—they returned to Medina even more upset. They began telling everyone about Yazīd's un-Islamic behavior, and that he was completely unfit to be the leader of the Muslims. Soon after, a rebellion broke out, and the Umayyads—the followers of Yazīd—were kicked out of Medina.

When Yazīd heard about this, he sent an army to Medina to squash the rebellion. This happened almost three years after the tragedy of Karbalāʾ. His army surrounded the city, giving the people no choice except to surrender. After this, Yazīd's army entered the city and wreaked havoc, slaughtering and harming thousands of innocent and pious people. This horrible incident came to be known as the 'Tragedy of Ḥarrah.'

During this tragedy, Yazīd had given clear instructions to his commander not to harm Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ or his family. Thus, the Imām's home actually became a safe haven, and many people were given shelter there. According to narrations, he housed more than 400 people during this time, many of whom had previously mistreated his family, such as Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam.

STOP AND REFLECT: Which good traits of morals and etiquettes *(akhlāq)* is the Imām ﷺ demonstrating by giving shelter to those who hurt his family before? Can this action of the Imām ﷺ be counted as a form of charity?

THE TAWWĀBĪN
(Those who were Penitents/Repenters)

Another notable rebellion that occurred as a result of the tragedy of Karbalāʾ was that of the Tawwābīn. They were the same individuals who gave their allegiance *(bayʿah)* to Muslim ibn ʿAqīl when he first came to Kūfah, but then they turned their backs on him. Immediately after the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, they regretted their actions and wanted to atone for their mistake, hence their title: "The Tawwābīn" which means "those who repent." The Tawwābīn were led by a man named Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad al-Khuzāʿī, and they rose up in the year 65 AH seeking revenge for Imām Ḥusayn 🕋, but they were quickly suppressed and killed.

MUKHTĀR ATH-THAQAFĪ

Perhaps the most famous uprising was that of Mukhtār ibn Abī ʿUbayd ath-Thaqafī. Mukhtār was imprisoned before the battle of Karbalāʾ, and therefore on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ he was not able to be with Imām Ḥusayn 🕋. When he was released from prison, he began a mission to seek revenge for what had transpired on the plains of Karbalāʾ. Although it is not fully clear whether Imām as-Sajjād 🕋 supported Mukhtār's movement or not, it has been established that he did not oppose it. He is recorded to have said: "May Allah reward Mukhtār with goodness," [4] when Mukhtār killed ʿUbaydullāh ibn Ziyād and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd.

Mukhtār's uprising began in 66 AH, and his army managed to kill many of the enemies, such as Ḥarmalah, Shimr, and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd. They also overthrew and killed Ibn Ziyād, the governor of Kūfah, and Mukhtār then took over and became the governor there. He only ruled for a little over a year, after which he was overthrown and killed by the army of Muṣʿab ibn Zubayr.

THE STATE OF THE CALIPHATE (KHILĀFAH)

Yazīd was only the caliph *(khalīfah)* for about three years. He died in the year 64 AH, after which his son, Muʿāwiyah ibn Yazīd, was appointed to the position. This man though was a pious person. He saw the oppressions that his father had caused to the family of the Ahlul Bayt 🕋, so after 40 days he abdicated (relinquished) the caliphate and disapproved of his father and grandfather's opposition of Imām ʿAlī 🕋 and his children.

Now, the Umayyads were unsure about who the new caliph should be. Eventually, the caliphate fell into the hands of Marwān ibn Ḥakam. Marwān had previously been the governor of Medina, and he was the one who tried to force Walīd to get the allegiance *(bayʿah)* from Imām Ḥusayn 🕋. Marwān was the ruler for 9 months, until he was assassinated in 65 AH. Then, his son, ʿAbdul Malik ibn Marwān, became the caliph.

THE KHILĀFAH OF ʿABD AL-MALIK IBN MARWĀN

One of the darkest periods in the history of Islam was during the rulership of ʿAbdul Malik ibn Marwān, which coincided with 21 years of Imām as-Sajjād's 🕋 *Imāmah*. Prior to becoming the caliph, ʿAbdul Malik was known to be a pious person in Medina because he would spend a lot of time worshiping.

According to several narrations, he was reciting the Qurʾān when he received the news about his father's death. Upon hearing this, he promptly closed the Qurʾān and said to this noble Book: "This is where you and I part ways!"

STOP AND REFLECT: How can a change in circumstances change the relationship that people have with Allah ﷻ?

His actions demonstrate how he truly did separate himself from the Qurʾān. He was a vicious oppressor whose heart became hard due to his horrible actions. He himself admitted: "I have changed so much to the point that if I do good actions, I do not become happy; and if I commit evil actions, I do not become upset." [5]

4 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 45, P. 385.
5 Ibn Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī at-Tārīkh*, Vol. 4, P. 521.

THE KHILĀFAH OF WALĪD IBN ʿABDUL MALIK

After the death of ʿAbdul Malik, his son Walīd became the next caliph. He felt that as long as Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ was alive, his rulership was not safe because the people loved the Imām ﷺ too much. Therefore, he decided to assassinate the Imām ﷺ by ordering the governor of Medina to poison him.

After drinking the poison, Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ suffered severe pain and was bedridden for a few days. During this time, he kept praying to Allah ﷻ, and whenever people came to visit him, he would praise Allah ﷻ and thank Him for granting him martyrdom.

Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ finally left this world on the 25th of Muḥarram, in the year 95 AH. Prior to his martyrdom, he made it clear to the people that his son, Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ, would be the Imām after him.[6]

THE LEGACY OF IMĀM AS-SAJJĀD ﷺ

Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ left behind many beautiful supplications *(duʿās)* and lessons for us in:

- *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-Sajjādiyyah*
  (Collection of Supplications of Imām as-Sajjād)
- *Risālat al-Ḥuqūq*
  (Treaties of Rights)
- *Al-Munājāt al-Khamsah ʿAsharah*
  (The 15 Whispered Prayers)

After the death of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, the circumstances remained very difficult for Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ. We can use the lessons of his steadfastness and patience to think about different responsibilities that we have to fulfill in our lives.

We know for a fact that he made the best decision in every situation because the Imāms ﷺ are *nūrun wāḥid*—meaning that they are all from the same light, and each one of them is immaculate. In our lives, we must always try our best to be tactful about the decisions that we have to make in order to ensure that they align with the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ.

6 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Al-Amālī*, Vol. 1, P. 435.

Activity 2.8a: A Timeline of Imāmah

In the timeline below, add in the events that happened [during the life-time of Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ] in the highlighted year.

Highlighted Year	Event
38 AH	
50 AH	
61 AH	
63 AH	
64 AH	
65 AH	
86 AH	
95 AH	

Activity 2.8b: Analyze a Supplication (Duʿāʾ) from *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-Sajjādiyyah*

Sayyid Husayn M. Jaʿfarī, a translator of *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-Sajjādiyyah*, answers the question: "Why does Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ pray for forgiveness of sins when he is inerrant (free from committing any sins)?"

He writes that:

> *The original Arabic words* **استغفار** *and* **توبة** *(istighfār and tawbah) can be translated as 'seeking forgiveness' and 'repentance,' but they convey meanings far broader than the English terms, both of which are connected with a sentimental and moralistic sense of guilt.*
>
> *When the Prophet ﷺ or Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ ask Allah ﷻ for forgiveness, they are perfectly sincere in this request, but it does not imply that they have any sins, rather they are asking forgiveness for not being able to truly thank Allah ﷻ how He deserves.*[7]

With the lens above, examine the Whispered Prayer *(Munājāt)* #1 toward the end of *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-Sajjādiyyah* which is referred to as the 'Whispered Prayer of the Repenters' *(Munājāt at-Tāʾibīn).* Read through the entire prayer, and then answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ prays for forgiveness in so many of his supplications and prayers *(duʿās* and *munājāt)*?

2. What can we learn from this whispered prayer?

7 *Translator's Foreword*: https://www.al-islam.org/sahifa-al-kamilah-al-sajjadiyya-imam-ali-zayn-al-abidin/translators-introduction

3. Annotate this *munājāt* based on your reflections when you read each line or section. Do not share your reflections with others. For example, you may reflect on some of the sins in your life that you are reminded of.

4. When you reach the end of this whispered prayer which details Allah's forgiving attributes, reflect on how each attribute is connected with forgiveness and repentance. Write your reflections here.

2.9 Imām al-Bāqir's Early Years

OBJECTIVES

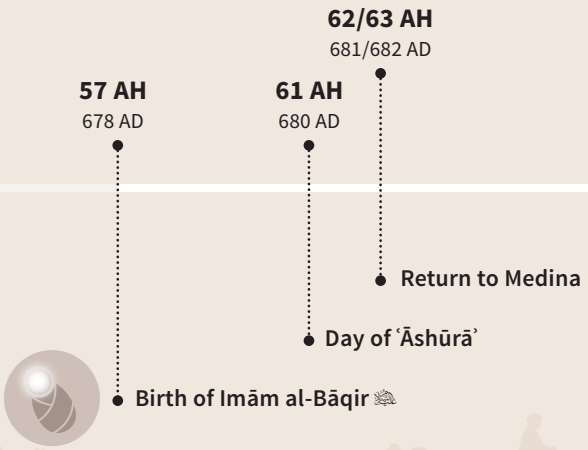
WE WILL:

- Explain the demographics of Imām al-Bāqir's life.
- Describe the experiences that Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ faced in Karbalāʾ and Shām during his early life.
- Develop strategies to understand useful knowledge in Islam.
- Explain how Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ established the foundations for the success of the Muslims through spreading true knowledge.

AN OVERVIEW OF IMĀM AL-BĀQIR ﷺ

Name	Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ﷺ
Kunyah	Abū Jaʿfar
Title	al-Bāqir
Parents	Fāṭimah bint Ḥasan (Umm ʿAbdullāh), Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ
Date of Birth	1st Rajab, 57 AH
Birthplace	Medina, Arabia
Duration of Imāmah	19 years
Date of Martyrdom	7th Dhul Ḥijjah, 114 AH
Place of Martyrdom	Medina, Arabia
Cause of Martyrdom	Martyred by poison
Lifespan	57 years
Location of Shrine	Jannatul Baqīʿ in Medina, Arabia

TIMELINE OF IMĀM AL-BĀQIR ﷺ



All of the Imāms ﷺ shared a goal, and that was to guide humanity toward their purpose, and each Imām ﷺ laid the foundation for future Imāms ﷺ and others to achieve this goal.

BIRTH TO ʿĀSHŪRĀʾ WITH IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ

Our 5th Imām, Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ, was born on the 1st day of the blessed month of Rajab. He was born in Medina to the 4th Imām Zaynul ʿAbidīn ﷺ and Fāṭimah, Umm ʿAbdullāh, who was the daughter of Imām Ḥasan ﷺ.

He is known as a beacon of light and the splitter of Islamic knowledge. He played a tremendous part in planting the seeds for the knowledge of Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq's school to flourish. He was born in a very difficult time, and the oppression of the Umayyad caliphate was very strong throughout the majority of his life.

When Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ was martyred on the 10th of Muḥarram in Karbalāʾ, Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ was only three and a half years old. As a young child, he witnessed his father, Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn's illness, his aunt Lady Zaynab ﷺ running from the burning tents trying to save the women and children, and all of the other oppression that ensued. He too, had to run from the horses that were trampling the children, and was chained along with Ruqayyah and Sukaynah, the daughters of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ. Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ, along with the other children, was taken captive to Kūfah and Shām.

ʿĀSHŪRAʾ UNTIL THEIR RETURN TO MEDINA

After the day of ʿĀshūraʾ, close to 50 children were taken as prisoners, out of which only 12 survived. Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ was with his father in the court of Yazīd in Shām. Yazīd threatened to enslave and kill the women and children of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ.

Imām as-Sajjād ﷺ spoke up and said:

O Yazīd! When Pharaoh was in power and consulted his advisors about Mūsā and Hārūn, they told him to let them live; whereas your advisors have told you to kill the children of the Prophet ﷺ [therefore, you and your advisors are even worse than Pharoah and his advisors]! [1]

STOP AND REFLECT: How does the 4th Imām's challenging the oppressor, especially in those circumstances, show that he was special?

1 Al-Masʿūdī, ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, *Ithbāt al-Waṣiyyah*, P. 171.

MEDINA TO THE SHAHĀDAH OF HIS FATHER, IMĀM ZAYNUL ʿĀBIDĪN

Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn was Imām for almost 34 years. As we discussed in some of the previous lessons, the environment at that time was such that Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn had to carry out many of his activities in secret. Some Muslims went as far as calling the Ahlul Bayt disbelievers *(kuffār)* based on the propaganda spread by the tyrant rulers.

However, Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn paid attention and showed concern for the people of Medina, especially the children, even the ones who had enmity toward the Ahlul Bayt, and spent quality time with them. Some of these children that Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn mentored and taught grew up to later become Imām al-Baqir's students. In this way, the 4th and 5th Imāms paved the way for the university of the 6th Imām to be successful.

There was a man living in Medina whose name was Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī. This man lived a long life—until the age of around 90! He was a companion of Prophet Muḥammad, Imām ʿAlī, Imām Ḥasan, Imām Ḥusayn, and Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn.

During his Prophethood, Prophet Muḥammad told Jābir: *O Jābir! One day, you will meet an individual who is from my family, whose name is my name, whose attributes are like mine, and who will open the doors of knowledge and wisdom for the people. Make sure to convey my salutations (salām) to him.*[2]

This was way before Imām al-Bāqir was even born! Finally, years later, during the *Imāmah* of the 4th Imām, Jābir met the young child who perfectly fit the description that the Prophet had described to him.

He asked the young Imām his name, and Imām al-Bāqir responded: "Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn." Jābir began to kiss his forehead and said: "Your grandfather said to me: 'O Jābir, send my salām to Muḥammad al-Bāqir, and know that he is al-Bāqir because he will split knowledge open thoroughly.'" [3]

This is where our beloved 5th Imām got his name *'al-Bāqir'* which means 'the splitter,' and the reason why he was known as *'Bāqir al-ʿUlūm'* was as Al-Yaʿqūbī writes that:

> "He was named 'Bāqir al-ʿUlūm' because 'he split open the knowledge.'" [4]

Sometimes, Islamic knowledge can be complicated, difficult for people to understand, or inaccessible. We say that Imām al-Bāqir 'split open the knowledge' because he began to spread it to the people in a way that was easy and accessible for everyone.

STOP AND REFLECT: If Islam is meant to be for all of humanity after the Prophet completed his message, then why is Islamic knowledge still difficult or inaccessible?

Imām al-Bāqir was able to teach people about Islam openly because the enemies of Islam were at war with each other for power and leadership. He educated many distinguished scholars of that time, and the companions of the Noble Prophet who were still alive. In fact, many of the books of the Ahl as-Sunnah contain the words of Imām al-Bāqir.

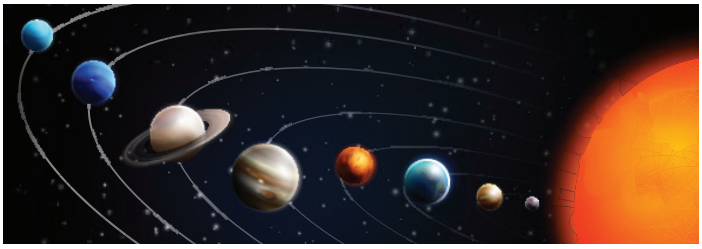
USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

If we come back to the question that what kind of knowledge were the Imāms referring to, we realize that they placed emphasis on any knowledge that could be used to:

1. Remind ourselves of Allah

For instance, if a student in the science class learns about the vastness of the solar system, the different types of stars, the perfect positioning of the planets, and so on, and if such knowledge leads one's mind and heart to think about Allah as the Designer of this marvelous creation, and the One who gave it all of its beauty, wonder, and power, then such knowledge is true knowledge.

On the other hand, you may have a student who simply learns facts from the same science class just for the sake of passing their exams. They may even quickly forget these facts. In such a case, they have not really benefited from this knowledge.



2 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 46, P. 295.
3 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, P. 469.
4 Ibn Abī Yaʿqūb, Aḥmad, *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, Vol. 2, P. 289.

2. Benefit others

A doctor who studies ten years of medicine simply to obtain respect from one's peers, earn enough money, and live a comfortable life is not considered to have reached one's full potential in the eyes of Allah ﷻ.

Consider another doctor who after becoming qualified gives special attention to the ill who cannot afford the expensive treatment, and who went to medical school so that they can help the less fortunate people for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. Would such a person not be held very dear in the eyes of Allah ﷻ?

In this regard, Imām al-Bāqir ؑ says:

> "A knowledgeable person who is beneficial to others as a result of one's knowledge is better than seventy thousand worshipers."[5]

3. Improve oneself by putting one's knowledge into practice

Such knowledge mainly includes the seeking of Islamic knowledge. If after learning how to respect one's parents, a student ignores what they have learned and still continues to disrespect them, then their knowledge according to our Imāms ؑ is useless because it has not been put to practice.

Similarly, studying the stories of our past Prophets ؑ and knowing all of their details is not enough. We need to derive lessons from them and then apply them in our own lives. Only then will this knowledge be useful.

Although the 5th Imām's period of *Imāmah* was a time when the political circumstances had improved for the followers of the Ahlul Bayt ؑ[6], the situation was still not one where the Imām ؑ could openly resist the oppressive government and establish a just Islamic society.

For this reason, Imām al-Bāqir ؑ worked on laying the groundwork for this important goal by fixing the mindset of the Muslims. The Imām ؑ knew that an unjust and oppressive Muslim society can only exist if the people allow it to exist—due to their ignorance of the true Islamic teachings.

During the 19 years of his *Imāmah*, Imām al-Bāqir ؑ spread teachings that were different from the deviant and corrupted version of Islamic teachings spread by the supporters of the Banū Umayyah. Their teachings allowed for injustice to remain in society. The Imām ؑ confronted them by introducing Muslims to the pure Islamic sciences. A Large number of scholars, including many of the prominent scholars of the Sunnī community,[7] studied sciences such as *Ḥadīth* (Narrations of the Prophet ﷺ), *Tafsīr* (deep understanding of the Qurʾān), *Aḥkām* (Jurisprudence), History, and Literature from Imām al-Bāqir ؑ.

STOP AND REFLECT: How can introducing people to Islamic sciences bring them closer to Allah ﷻ and away from deviant teachings?

The Imām ؑ also taught sciences such as *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence), and *Akhlāq* (Morals and Etiquettes) which helped people realize that Islam has vast treasures of knowledge through which we can get to know Allah ﷻ, and become human beings in the true sense of those words.

To summarize, any knowledge we gain and can put into practice—whether it is in our Science class, Jurisprudence, Ethics, or History—that helps us to both remember Allah ﷻ and benefit others, is the knowledge that Islam stresses upon.

5 Rayshahrī, Muḥammad, *Mizān al-Ḥikmah,* Ḥadith # 2190.
6 Due to two reasons: The success of Imām as-Sajjād's efforts, as well as the decline of the Banū Umayyah.
7 Individuals such as Abū Ḥanīfah, Qutādah ibn Diʿāmah, and Ṭāwūs al-Yamānī.

Activity 2.9a: Review Questions

1. Why is Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ known as *'Bāqir al-ʿUlūm?'* What does *ʿulūm* mean?

2. How can seeking knowledge of history and the past be applied to our daily lives? List some practical morals from this lesson that you can apply in your daily life.

3. Our Imāms ﷺ stressed that the intention behind and practice after gaining knowledge are what make the difference between useful and non-useful knowledge. Consider your intention in attending this class. How can you refine it to make the knowledge that you will gain more beneficial?

Activity 2.9b: Examining their Intentions

In the table below, change the intention that may not be that beneficial to a more beneficial outlook on gaining knowledge for the people involved.

SCENARIO	TREATING IT AS FACTS	REFRAME IT TO BE BENEFICIAL KNOWLEDGE
Samirah needs a CPR class credit to become a babysitter.	She reluctantly takes the class, thinking she will never need to use this information.	
In his Civil Rights class, Tanvir is learning about civil rights and the movement for black people to gain more rights in America.		Tanvir knows that black Americans are still facing injustices in various ways, and that they are still being treated oppressively through systemic racism. He listens carefully in class to see what he can do for black Americans, especially for any black Muslims in his area.
Nusrat is learning about taxes and the various policies that can affect her in her college Accounting class.		
Hashim will turn 12 in a few days. The Shaykh at the local masjid is giving a lecture on reaching the age of becoming Islamically mature *(bulūgh),* and his mom is encouraging him to go.	Hashim goes to the lecture for the sake of his mom, but does not pay attention or take any notes. He thinks that he will just figure out the rules when he becomes that age of responsibility *(bāligh)*.	
Zaynab learns that a local Muslim author is coming to her English class to give a workshop on good writing techniques.		

2.10 Imām al-Bāqir's Imāmah

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Analyze the state of the Islamic world during the childhood and subsequent *Imāmah* of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ.
- Identify some of the accomplishments of the companions of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ.
- Recognize the skills of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ in logic and debating.
- Understand the importance of physical skills in conjunction with logical skills based on the emphasis on Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ.

THE BEGINNING OF IMĀM AL-BĀQIR'S IMĀMAH:
Lifting the Ban on Ḥadīth

Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ was born during a time of very oppressive rulers. There were five Umayyad caliphs during his lifetime.

After Prophet Muḥammad's death, the corrupt leadership of the time banned the recording and compilation of his *ḥadīth*, better known as Prophetic traditions in English, because they felt that this would threaten their claim to authority and power.

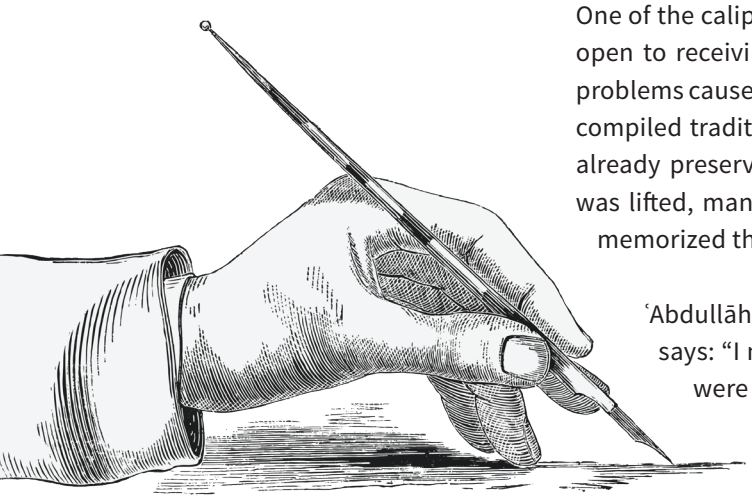
The years after the Prophet's death in which *ḥadīth* were not allowed to be recorded, had both short-term and long-term consequences for Muslims and Islam. Imagine how many words of the Prophet ﷺ must have been lost because of this ban!

STOP AND REFLECT: Why is it important to preserve both the Qurʾān, and the words and actions of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ?

As we know, the words of the Prophet ﷺ are the second most important source of Islamic knowledge after the Noble Qurʾān, and both of these are inseparable from one another! We know this because the Qurʾān itself says this in the following verse:

> "So take whatever the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you." [1]

During this time, the companions of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the Imāms ﷺ worked hard to remember and write down as many traditions as they possibly could. Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was the first individual to create a book with the traditions of the final Prophet ﷺ, and it was passed down to all of the Imāms ﷺ until it reached our 5th Imām ﷺ.



One of the caliphs during Imām al-Bāqir's Imamate, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbdul ʿAzīz, was more open to receiving advice from the Imām ﷺ, and sought to remediate some of the problems caused by his forefathers. He finally allowed the Muslims to begin publishing compiled traditions. Since the followers of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ and the Imāms ﷺ were already preserving the words of the Maʿṣūmīn ﷺ for so many years, when the ban was lifted, many of the students and companions of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ had already memorized thousands of *ḥadīth*!

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAṭā, one of the prominent scholars at the time of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ says: "I never saw the scholars of the time so humbled by knowledge as they were in the gatherings of Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ﷺ. I saw Ḥakam ibn ʿUtaybah, who was a noble and glorious scholar during his time, sit in front of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ as if he was overpowered." [2]

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥashr (59), Verse 7.
2 Ibn al-Jawzī, Sibṭ, *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ*, P. 337.

IMĀM AL-BĀQIR'S STUDENTS

Many of the students and companions of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ saw great progress during his *Imāmah*.

STOP AND REFLECT: What areas would Imām al-Bāqir's companions have seen progress in? What defines progress in an Islamic community?

An important Shīʿah figure of that time was Muḥammad ibn Muslim, who was a frequent visitor of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ and Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ. He wrote:

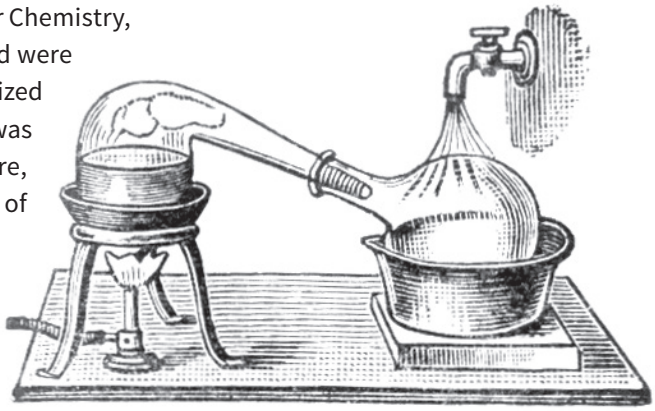
Whatever matter came to mind, I would ask Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ, and he would give me an answer in such a manner that I was able to learn 30,000 traditions from him, and 16,000 traditions from Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ.[3]

Unfortunately, in later years, especially during the period of the Abbasid Dynasty, many of the *ḥadīth* from this period were destroyed.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why would the rulers of different times destroy *ḥadīth*? What does this tell us about the knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ?

Jābir ibn Ḥayyān was one of the students of Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ who continued the school established by Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ. Jābir was an amazing scientist whose contributions in many scientific fields, particularly chemistry, are widely acknowledged even until today. He invented several types of laboratory equipment, as well as many chemicals used today.

According to Jābir, obtaining knowledge is a unique process. One who seeks wisdom must first study an array of subjects to prepare oneself to learn Alchemy or Chemistry, the chiefs of all sciences. Jābir's works extended beyond materialism, and were full of spiritual growth. Upon acquiring surrounding knowledge, he emphasized finding the great elixir or '*Ḥajar al-Falāsifah*' (Stone of Philosophers). This was a demonstration of true success as it allowed gaining knowledge of nature, as well as Divine knowledge. The work of chemistry is beyond interactions of the world, but are those that connect us on a deeper level to Allah ﷻ.[4]

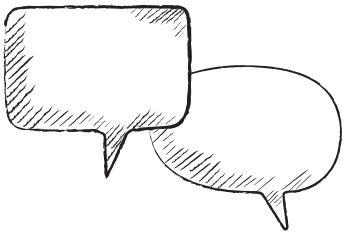


Jābir discovered alembic, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, and sulfuric acid—all of which are used in Chemistry labs today.

The last 2-3 years of Imām al-Bāqir's *Imāmah* (which lasted a total of 18 years) had the most progress! Sometimes, when we think about the Imāms ﷺ who were able to freely spread their knowledge, we immediately think about the schools and thousands of students of Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, our 6th Imām ﷺ, but we forget the importance of the previous Imāms ﷺ who laid the groundwork beforehand.

3 Shaykh Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār Maʿrifat ar-Rijāl*, Vol. 1, P. 386.
4 (March 29, 2022), *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān,* https://en.wikishia.net/view/Jabir_b._Hayyan

A DEBATE WITH THE ARCHBISHOP OF THE CHRISTIANS



When the 5th Imām ﷺ was leaving Damascus to return to Medina, there was a large gathering of Christian priests and monks who were waiting for the Archbishop near the palace. They wished to ask him for solutions to their problems, and receive answers for some questions that they had. The Imām ﷺ saw this gathering and asked his companions if there was some celebration for the Christians that day. They replied that every year the Christians go to a scholar who had met one of the companions of Jesus's disciples and ask him questions. The Imām ﷺ then sat down amongst the Christians.[5]

When the Archbishop arrived, he asked Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ: "Are you a Christian, or are you from the Muslims?"

The Imām ﷺ responded: "I am from the Muslims!" [6]

The Archbishop then asked him: "Are you from their scholars or from their ignorant ones?"

Imām ﷺ responded: "I am not from the ignorant ones!"

The Archbishop then began to respectfully ask the Imām ﷺ a series of very difficult questions, and the Imām ﷺ answered all of them very clearly and completely. The Archbishop became angry and left the gathering, after admitting that the knowledge of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ was greater than his own, and that his leadership was superior.

STOP AND REFLECT: Analyze how both Muslims and non-Muslims can benefit from the Imām's words.

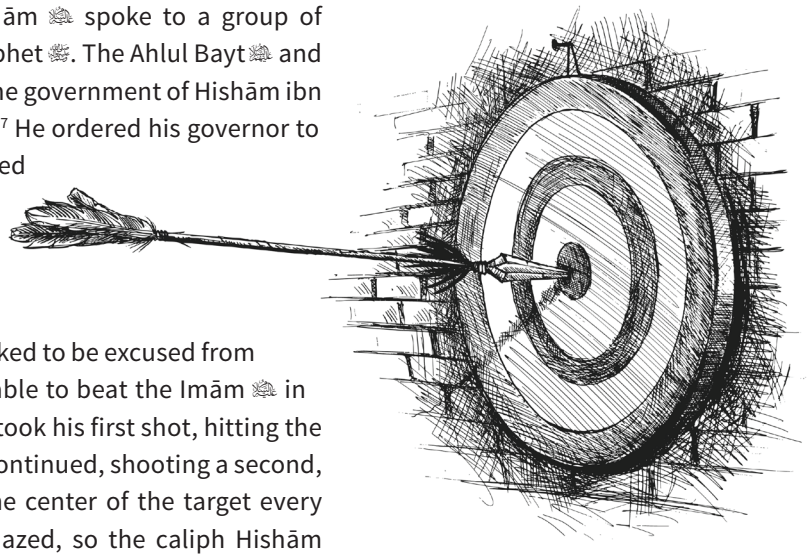
Hishām ibn ʿAbdul Malik, the caliph of the time, rather than rejoicing at the Imām's victory, became very fearful. He thought to himself: What if the people begin to realize the truth of the Imamate, and the spiritual influence of the Imām ﷺ begins to grow even more? He began to spread rumors that the Imām ﷺ wanted to convert to Christianity! However, all of Hishām's efforts to slander the Imām ﷺ failed, and everyone was shown the truth of Imām al-Bāqir's wisdom and knowledge! The 5th Imām ﷺ had many other debates with lots of people throughout his *Imāmah*, and everyone he debated with was overcome by the truth.

5 Adapted from: https://en.wikishia.net/view/Text:Debate_of_Imam_al-Baqir_(a)_with_the_Christian_scholar

6 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī,* Vol. 8, P. 123.

IMĀM AL-BĀQIR'S ARCHERY SKILLS

The last caliph during Imām al-Bāqir's Imamate was the most oppressive toward the Imām 🕋 and went to great lengths to humiliate him. He was very threatened by the Imām 🕋, and often arranged for atheists, Christians, and other Muslims to debate the 5th Imām 🕋. Once, while performing *Ḥajj*, the Imām 🕋 spoke to a group of people about the characteristics of the family of the Prophet 🕋. The Ahlul Bayt 🕋 and especially Imām al-Bāqir 🕋 were a significant threat to the government of Hishām ibn ʿAbdul Malik, so he was very intimidated by this sermon.[7] He ordered his governor to send the Imām 🕋 and his son to Syria, where he challenged him to an archery competition, knowing quite well that he did not have the scholars to defeat the Imām 🕋 in a scholarly debate.



Imām al-Bāqir 🕋 was an elderly man by this time, and asked to be excused from this, but Hishām insisted, thinking he would finally be able to beat the Imām 🕋 in something. Imām al-Bāqir 🕋 took a bow and arrow and took his first shot, hitting the bull's eye perfectly! Hishām was shocked! The Imām 🕋 continued, shooting a second, third, and finally nine arrows, all which perfectly hit the center of the target every time and eventually split the wood! Everyone was amazed, so the caliph Hishām said: "Amazing, O Abū Jaʿfar! You are the master of archers from amongst the Arabs and non-Arabs." He continued to praise both Imām al-Bāqir 🕋 and Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq 🕋 saying: "Does your son Jaʿfar also have this level of proficiency in archery?"

Imām al-Bāqir 🕋 responded:

> "We, the Household (of the Prophet), are the 'Perfection of the Religion' and the 'Completion of the Blessings;' the verse[8] was revealed about us *(Imāmah and Wilāyah)*, and we succeed one another. The Earth will never remain empty of one of us."[9]

STOP AND REFLECT: How does Islam emphasize physical skills? In which way can you implement this in your own life?

Despite all of this, the caliph, Hishām continued to feel a threat to his government. His heart did not soften toward the Imām 🕋, and on the 7th of Dhul Ḥijjah, 114 AH, the soul of Imām al-Bāqir 🕋 returned to Allah ﷻ after he was poisoned by the caliph.

7 Pīshvāʾī, Mahdī, *Sīre Pīshvāyān,* P. 349.
8 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Māʾidah (5), Verse 3.
9 Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, *Dalāʾil al-Imāmah,* P. 235.

Activity 2.10a: Companions of Knowledge

Using online resources and this lesson, answer the questions below about one of these students of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ:

- Muḥammad ibn Muslim
- Jābir ibn Ḥayyān

1. What city was this student originally from?

2. What was the specialty of this companion/student of Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ?

3. Find one tradition *(ḥadīth)* narrated by this individual.

4. What lesson can you learn from how this individual treated the 5th Imām ﷺ?

Activity 2.10b: An Expert Bowman

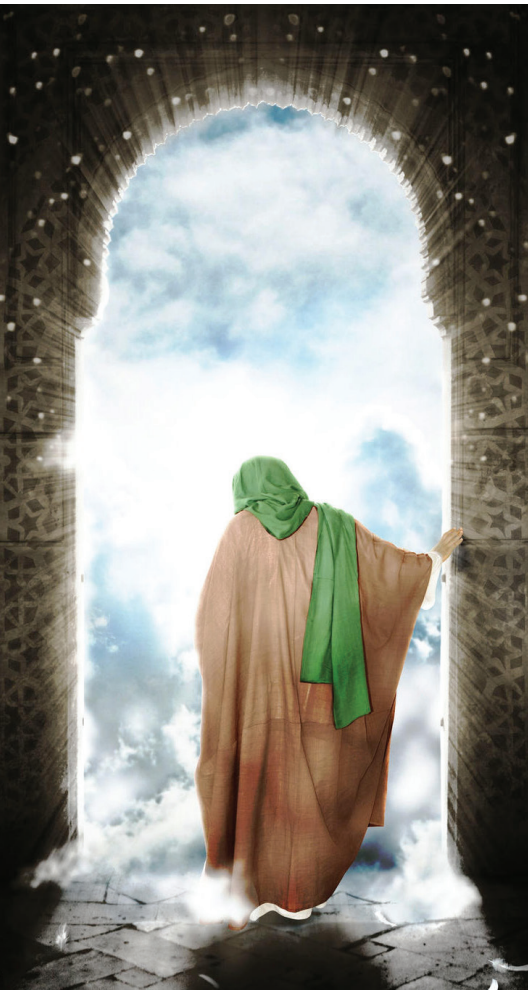
Using the space below, draw or write a few paragraphs describing the shock that people must have experienced when an elderly Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ managed to beat Hishām in archery.

2.11 Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Outline some of the reasons why the 12th Imām ﷺ is in a concealed state.
- Develop strategies to incorporate the remembrance of the Imām ﷺ of our time, and gain closeness to him.
- Come up with some ideas of how to engage in active *intidhār* (awaiting) the rightly guided final Imām ﷺ.



Activity 2.11a: Pre-Reading Vocabulary

In small groups, answer one of the assigned questions. Be ready to share with the class what you think!

1. The word *'ghaybah'*—'occultation'—means 'in a hidden or a concealed state.' This refers to the 12th Imām ﷺ, Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ, who is concealed from us. Related words in Arabic are *'ghā'ib'* which means 'absent;' and *'ghayb'* which means 'unseen or hidden.' **What is the difference between someone being 'absent' and someone who is 'unseen?'**
2. *Intidhār* means 'waiting' which in this lesson refers to 'waiting for the rightly guided Imām ﷺ'—*'Intidhār al-Mahdī.'* People who wait for the Imām ﷺ are known as *'muntadhirīn.'* **What do you think 'waiting for the Imām ﷺ' actually means? How do you act, or what do you do when you are really waiting for someone, or for something to happen?**
3. *Ḥujjah* refers to 'a Divine representative of Allah ﷻ.' This can also mean 'proof' where we say that each of the Imāms ﷺ are the *'ḥujjatullāh'*—'proof of Allah ﷻ.' **How do you think the two definitions of *ḥujjah* are related?**

STOP AND REFLECT: How does Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف affect our daily lives? Think about the last time you remembered the Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف. What made you think about him? Has it been a long time?

OUR NEED FOR A ḤUJJAH

At all times, this Earth needs to have a *ḥujjah*—a Divinely-appointed representative. Allah ﷻ created this Earth for us to reach perfection, which as we learned in previous lessons, can only be done through Divine guides and revelation that were sent by Him.

WHY IS THE 12TH IMĀM عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف IN OCCULTATION?

The complete wisdom behind the decision of Allah ﷻ for the *ghaybah* of our 12th Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف is unknown to us. ʿAbdullāh ibn Faḍl Ḥāshimī once asked Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq عليه السلام about the reason behind the occlusion of the final Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف, to which he replied:

O son of Faḍl! The subject of the ghaybah is among the Divine secrets, and a concealed matter whose knowledge is only with Allah ﷻ. Since we regard Allah ﷻ to be All-Wise, we must also affirm that His actions are based on that perfect wisdom, even when the detailed understandings are not accessible to us.[1]

Although we do not know all of the reasons for Allah's actions, there are certain reasons for the *ghaybah* that the previous Imāms عليهم السلام did explain. One reason is that Allah ﷻ wished for Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف to never be forced to have to give allegiance to any tyrant during his lifetime. Another reason is because if the Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف was not in occultation, then his life would be in constant danger.[2]

STOP AND REFLECT: Why were the other Imāms عليهم السلام not in occultation even though their lives were also in danger?

People wanted to take away the rights of the Divine guides because they sought power for themselves. All of the Imāms عليهم السلام faced great dangers from the enemies who wanted to kill them, and/or make them give allegiance to them. But the Imāms عليهم السلام wanted to lead and guide the people because this was a responsibility that was given to them by Allah ﷻ; and due to the fact that they were free from any sins *(maʿṣūm)* they did everything perfectly, exactly the way that Allah ﷻ wanted.

INTIDHĀR: waiting

GHAYBAH: occultation, in a hidden or a concealed state

ḤUJJAH: proof, refers to a Divine representative of Allah ﷻ

MAʿṢŪM: free from any sins

1 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Kamāl ad-Dīn wa Tamām an-Niʿmah,* Chapter on the Wisdoms of the Occultation.
2 *Kamāl ad-Dīn wa Tamām an-Niʿmah,* Chapter on the Wisdoms of the Occultation.

During the time of Imām ʿAlī ﷺ, people tried to take the leadership away from the Imām ﷺ because they knew that he would be fair to everyone, and would not favor anyone unjustly. Even though this upset our Imām ﷺ, he made it clear that he did not care about power, money, fame, or glory. He explained this in a famous sermon called *Shaqshaqiyyah*:

…I put a curtain up against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it. Then I began to think whether I should attack or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations… I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience—although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation in the throat…[3]

STOP AND REFLECT: How does Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله فرجه guide us while he is in occultation?

Although Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله فرجه is concealed from humanity, he is still an active guide on Earth. An example that is used in the traditions *(ḥadīth)* about our Imām عجل الله فرجه in occultation is that 'he is like the sun behind the clouds.' Although he is concealed from us, we still benefit from his light and guidance.

We must also understand that the Imām عجل الله فرجه is hidden from us, but we are not hidden from him. He has knowledge about the state of his believers.

STOP AND REFLECT: What do we do when we are waiting for guests to come to our house? How does this apply to how we should wait for the Imām عجل الله فرجه?

One of the best actions for us to do during this time is to truly await the Imām عجل الله فرجه and the victory that will come with his return, as Imām al-Jawād ﷺ said:

> "The best of the actions that our Shīʿahs can do is anticipate the deliverance *(faraj)*."[4]

This *ḥadīth* refers to the return of the 12th Imām عجل الله فرجه, and the word 'actions' is important because we need to be 'actively waiting' for the Imām عجل الله فرجه.

What does it mean to actively wait for something or someone? When we talk about waiting for a guest to arrive, it means that we prepare for their arrival. We may get dressed up in our nicest clothes, make sure that our house is clean and everything is neat and tidy, and prepare some delicious food. If we know that a guest is coming to our house and everything is a mess, then we cannot say that we were really waiting for them to come.

3 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 3, Vol. 1, P. 48.
4 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 51, P. 156.

If we want to actively wait for the Imām ﷺ—do true *intidhār*—and be one of his sincere followers, then we need to fulfill our responsibilities toward him.

In *Duʿāʾ an-Nudbah*, we say:

> "May my soul be sacrificed for you; although you are hidden from us, you have never abandoned us.
> May my soul be sacrificed for you; although you are away (concealed), you are never away from us."

STAYING CONNECTED TO THE IMĀM ﷺ

We should try to remember Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ every day of our life. While some of the ways in which we can do this are prescribed, like the specific supplications, prayers, and different actions *(aʿmāl)* we can do on his behalf, we should also speak to the Imām ﷺ whenever we want to, and in any language we desire. We can send our salutations *(salāms)* to him, or speak to him silently inside our hearts. Sometimes, we hear people saying: *"Ya ʿAlī Madad"*—"O ʿAlī help"—calling for help from Imām ʿAlī ﷺ; or *"Ya Mahdī Adriknī"*—"O Mahdī assist me"—calling for aide from Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ, in which they can feel the presence of these great personalities in their lives, and they never forget about them.

Thus, we can speak to the Imām ﷺ of our time in our own words, ask for his return, and tell him how we wish we could be better human beings. We can ask him to pray to Allah ﷻ for us for whatever we may be having trouble with, so that we can be one of his true followers. We should know that even though we cannot really see Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ, he is still constantly helping the universe, and is capable of guiding us within a split second, or by the slightest attention.

We can also write a *'ʿarīḍah'* which is 'a letter to the Imām ﷺ' and put it in flowing water, bury it, or take it to the gravesite of one of the other Imāms ﷺ. Although we can still speak to him without doing this, sometimes symbolic actions like this have effects that we are unaware of. Writing down our thoughts, desires, and feelings also has a lot of benefits to it, rather than just verbalizing them.

Some different actions *(aʿmāl)* that we can do for our living Imām ﷺ include:

- Prayer *(Ṣalāh)* of Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ
- *Duʿāʾ al-Ḥujjah*
- *Duʿāʾ al-Faraj*
- *Duʿāʾ an-Nudbah*
- *Duʿāʾ al-ʿAhd*
- Do good deeds, take out *ṣadaqah,* perform *ziyārah* on his behalf, or basically perform any good action and gift the rewards of that to the Imām ﷺ
- Avoid forbidden acts

Most importantly, we should strive to follow the examples of the Imām ﷺ, and act in such a way that we would if he were with us here right now.

Activity 2.11b: Explain it!

DIRECTIONS: Sarah and her older brother Jawaad are on their way back from Sunday School. Sarah has a lot of questions after her Islamic Studies class. Help Jawaad answer Sarah's questions.

SARAH: Jawaad, my Islamic Studies class today was really confusing, but I want to understand Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ better. I understand that our Imām is in a concealed state, but why does it have to be this way? Would it not be better for all of us if he was present among us?

JAWAAD: I used to have a lot of the same questions Sarah, and sometimes I still ask questions about the Imāms ﷺ. But in regards to this, I best understand this concealed state in the following way:

SARAH: Hmm, okay Jawaad, I think I understand this now, but what should we be doing while he is in occultation? I know my teacher said that we should be waiting for the Imām ﷺ, but how will that help?

JAWAAD:

SARAH: I wish I could be closer to the Imām ﷺ right now.

JAWAAD: Sarah, do not be sad, there are still ways to be close to the Imām ﷺ even right now.

SARAH: How though? He is so far away from us, we do not even know where he is.

JAWAAD:

Activity 2.11c: Waiting for my Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف

Look again at the section on "Our Responsibilities towards our Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف." What are some actions that you plan to do in order to show that you are truly waiting for the Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف? When do you plan to do them?

ACTION	WHEN OR HOW I PLAN TO DO THIS ACTION

CHAPTER 3

History of Prophets عليهم السلام

3.1 Prophet Ādam عليه السلام, the First Human Being

3.2 Prophet Nūḥ's Perseverance

3.1 Prophet Ādam ﷺ, the First Human Being

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Explain the circumstances surrounding the creation of Prophet Ādam ﷺ.
- Analyze the difference between a law of Allah ﷻ, and advice from Allah ﷻ.
- Identify the various kinds of arrogance in the framework of the story of *Iblīs (Shayṭān)*, and his refusal to prostrate to Prophet Ādam ﷺ.
- Identify some of the signs of pride; and reflect on the dangers of pride and arrogance.

This lesson is an overview of the story of Prophet Ādam ﷺ from the perspective of the Qurʾān. In it, we will learn a significant message about the evils of pride.

All Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) agree that Prophet Ādam ﷺ was the very first human being to be created. The details of his creation, and the resulting beliefs have influenced the core of many religions.

In the story of Prophet Ādam ﷺ and Lady Ḥawwāʾ (Adam and Eve) in the Bible, Christians typically believe in a concept known as the "original sin." They believe that Ādam ﷺ and Ḥawwāʾ committed a 'sin' by eating from the tree, so all human beings—who are their children—are born sinners.

They also typically believe that women have a defect because according to them, Ḥawwāʾ encouraged Prophet Ādam ﷺ to eat from the tree. As Muslims, we know from the miracle of the Qurʾān and the knowledge contained within it that these beliefs are not correct. We will discuss the status of Ḥawwāʾ in Islam, and the potential for both men and women to reach the highest levels of perfection, which we were created for.

THE CREATION OF PROPHET ĀDAM ﷺ AND LADY ḤAWWĀʾ

In various places in the Noble Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ describes the creation of human beings as follows:

> *We created humans of an extraction of clay, then We set them, a drop, in a receptacle secure; then We created of the drop a clot; then We created of the clot a tissue; then We created of the tissue bones; then We garmented the bones in flesh; thereafter We produced them as another creature. So blessed be Allah, the best of creators!* [1]
>
> *And when your Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a mortal out of clay from an altered black mud. And when I have shaped him, and breathed into him My spirit, then fall down to him in prostration.'* [2]

Allah ﷻ created human beings in an extremely precise manner. Each stage is a wondrous miracle. The last stage—which Allah ﷻ describes as 'breathing into them His spirit'—is the creation of the human soul or the spirit. Thus the soul of a human being is so precious that Allah ﷻ refers to it as 'My' spirit.

STOP AND REFLECT: Discuss how the different stages of the lives of human beings—from inside the womb of a mother to the deathbed—are all miraculous in their own ways.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Muʾminūn (23), Verses 12-14.
2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15), Verses 28-29.

THE ANGELS PROSTRATE TO PROPHET ĀDAM ﷺ

As we read in the last verse, the angels were commanded by Allah ﷻ to prostrate to Prophet Ādam ﷺ.

Let us read the story from the Qurʾān:

And He taught Ādam the names—all of them. Then He presented them to the angels and said: 'Tell me the names of these, if you are truthful.' They said: 'Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.' He said: 'O Ādam, inform them of their names,' and when he had informed them of their names, He said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and that I know whatever you disclose and whatever you conceal?' [3]

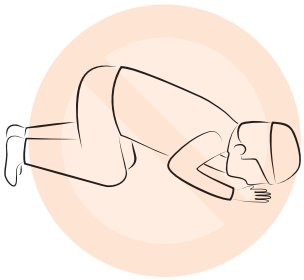
And when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate before Ādam,' so they prostrated, but not Iblīs: he refused and acted arrogantly, and he was one of the faithless. [4]

And We said: 'O Ādam, dwell you and your mate in paradise, and eat thereof freely wheresoever you wish, but do not approach this tree, lest you should be among the wrongdoers.' [5]

But Satan caused them to stumble from it, and he dislodged them from what [state] they were in; and We said: 'Get down, some of you being the enemies of others! On the earth shall be your abode and sustenance for a time.' [6]

Then Ādam received certain words from his Lord, and He turned to him clemently. Indeed He is the One who accepts Repentance, the All-Merciful. We said: 'Get down from it, all together! And when guidance comes to you from Me, those who follow My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who are faithless and deny Our signs, they shall be the inmates of the Fire and they shall remain in it [forever].' [7]

3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verses 31-33.
4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 34.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 35.
6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 36.
7 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verses 37-39.



We learn several things from this story:

1. Allah ﷻ created Prophet Ādam ﷺ with special knowledge. The angels thought that they knew everything, but were embarrassed when Allah ﷻ informed them that Ādam ﷺ knew more than they did. We have to remember that we cannot be haughty and proud about what we know, and even if we initially do this, then we must become humble when the truth is shown to us.

2. Iblīs refused to accept the truth and submit to the command of the Almighty because of his arrogance and pride. Even though all of the others prostrated, he did not. Later in this lesson we will discuss the evils of pride.

3. Ādam ﷺ and Ḥawwāʾ were asked not to approach a particular tree. This was a recommendation, **not** an order. In Islam, there are two types of commands that Allah ﷻ gives to His creations: [8]

   a) **A LAW:** Where Allah ﷻ decrees a command which has to be fulfilled, and failure to do so will result in punishment. (for example, the *wājib* or obligatory actions, such as the daily *ṣalāh,* or fasting in the month of Ramaḍān, etc.)

   b) **ADVICE:** Where Allah ﷻ says or advises people to do something, but the action to be done is not obligatory *(wājib),* rather the command is simply guidance or advice which is meant to make life for that person easier or better. Not doing that action will not result in a sin, but may have natural consequences attached to it. This was the kind of order that Prophet Ādam ﷺ received regarding the tree. That garden was not a place of rewards or punishments for one's actions.

   Example: some foods in Islam are allowed and lawful *(ḥalāl),* while some are impermissible and forbidden *(ḥarām)*. This is a law ordained by the Creator, and not observing it is sinful. At the same time, Islam recommends a person to avoid overeating, even if we are eating *ḥalāl* food. This is advice or guidance. If we do not follow it, we are not sinning; however, we will suffer the natural consequences of it, such as a stomach ache or poor health. The natural consequence of Prophet Ādam ﷺ not following the advice that was given to them by Allah ﷻ was that he and his wife had to leave that garden, and now face the difficulties of life. There is a cause and effect relationship to every action that we do, and the effect of their action was that they had to begin this journey.

4. Prophet Ādam ﷺ sought forgiveness for his actions of not adhering to the advice of Allah ﷻ, so He forgave him and gave him the good news of guidance.

5. After he was forgiven, Prophet Ādam ﷺ saw that his status was even higher than before, and he now had the potential to take his God-given talents to reach statuses that he could not even imagine.

8 eHawza - Ancient Prophets for the Modern World: Prophet Ādam ﷺ - Sem. 2.

IBLĪS (SHAYṬĀN) WAS PROUD AND ARROGANT

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ۝

And when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate before Ādam,' they prostrated, but not Iblīs: he refused and acted arrogantly, and he was one of the faithless. [9]

KIBR: arrogance or pride

KUFR: disbelief

In this verse above, we see that Allah ﷻ describes *Iblīs (Shayṭān)* as one who acted out of *'kibr'* which means 'arrogance or pride.' One of the lessons we learn is that *Shayṭān's* arrogance was his downfall, despite the fact that he had been praying among the angels for such a long time.

Shayṭān thought that he was better than Prophet Ādam ﷺ, and despite being shown the truth, he remained stubborn and arrogant. If we show any such characteristics in our lives, then we may be put in the same category as *Shayṭān* on the Day of Judgment.

There are three main types of pride:

1. **Arrogance against Allah ﷻ:** This is disbelief *(kufr)*. It is like what *Shayṭān* did. We become arrogant against Allah ﷻ when we do not follow His commandments purposefully, or when we question His laws and orders because we think we know better.
2. **Arrogance against the Noble Prophet ﷺ or the 12 Imāms ﷺ:** This is where we think we know more than them, and accuse them of giving inaccurate teachings or making wrong decisions.
3. **Arrogance against other people:** This is where we think that we are better than others for any reason—whether it be nationalistic, or due to our wealth, race, possessions, knowledge, etc.

All of these types of arrogance are forbidden in Islam, and can cause someone to have the characteristics of *Shayṭān*.

The Noble Prophet ﷺ has said:

> "A person who humbles oneself before Allah will be raised by Him in status; but the one who is arrogant will be degraded by Allah." [10]

9 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 34.
10 Shīrāzī, Shahīd Dasteghaib, *The Greater Sins*, Ch. 3.

SIGNS OF PRIDE

1. If in gatherings and social events, a person likes to be in a position of leadership, or wants to be the center of attention.
2. If one finds it difficult to say *salām* to others, or show humility to people who are lower than them in social status.
3. If it is difficult for a person to accept the invitation of poor people, or to sit with people who are less fortunate or disadvantaged in society.
4. If a person feels that it is below one's dignity to perform physical or unclean work, such as sweeping the floor, cleaning a bathroom, or something similar.
5. Committing a sin—big or small—may be a sign of pride against Allah ﷻ, especially if the person does not feel guilty about this and repent afterwards.

LADY ḤAWWĀʾ, THE FIRST FEMALE CREATED

The word **حواء** (*ḥawwāʾ*) in Arabic comes from the root word **حيى** (*ḥayy*)—which means 'living.' Lady Ḥawwāʾ was one of the first two human beings to be created by Allah ﷻ, and she is the mother of all people after her, so this name is especially appropriate for her, for it is like 'she lives on in other people.'

Allah ﷻ created the first human, Prophet Ādam ﷺ from dust. His wife Ḥawwāʾ was created from the remaining clay of Prophet Ādam ﷺ, and they resided in paradise together amongst the angels.

Other Abrahamic religions have alternate opinions about her creation. In Judaism, there are two thoughts on this. One is that she was created at the same time as Ādam ﷺ, while another says that she was created much later, after Ādam ﷺ was unable to find a good companion for himself from among the existing creations.[11] Some think that she was created from the ribs of Prophet Ādam ﷺ. Others believe that Ḥawwāʾ encouraged Ādam ﷺ to eat from the tree that Allah ﷻ had forbidden them from because *Shayṭān* influenced her to convince Ādam ﷺ to do this.

Some unauthentic Muslim narrations also say that she was created from a part of the rib of Prophet Ādam ﷺ, and they claim that this shows the inferiority of women to men.

However, as we discussed before, the Qurʾān completely contradicts these beliefs.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why do some Muslims believe that Lady Ḥawwāʾ was created from the rib of her husband?

Through authentic chains, we know that a companion asked Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ how the Almighty created Lady Ḥawwāʾ. The Imām ﷺ in turn, asked him what other people say about her creation. He was told they think Allah ﷻ created her from the rib of Prophet Ādam ﷺ. The Imām ﷺ said that this is a lie.[12]

We can see from this tradition that it is not correct to believe that Ḥawwāʾ was created from Ādam ﷺ himself.

If we think about all of the resources that we have available which show us the status of men and women, especially the status of the four women of Paradise, namely Lady Āsiyah, Lady Maryam, Lady Khadījah ﷺ, and Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ, we realize that women have the same potential as men to reach the highest levels of perfection. All human beings have an innate nature *(fiṭrah)* that take us closer to Allah ﷻ when we work to remove sins from our lives, and pray to Him ﷻ to forgive us for our short-comings. Our physical appearances may vary, but Allah ﷻ has made all people with the potential to be the most perfect of any of His creatures.

11 Adapted from https://en.wikishia.net/view/Eve#Eve_in_the_Islamic_Tradition (accessed on June 28, 2022).
12 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 11, P. 116.

PROPHET ĀDAM AND ʿARAFĀT

After some time, Prophet Ādam and Lady Ḥawwāʾ were both sent down to earth, but in separate places. This was another test from Allah for them. According to some narrations, Ādam was sent down to the mountain of Ṣafā, and Ḥawwāʾ was sent to the mountain of Marwah.[13] Other historians say that Ādam was sent down to Sarandīb,[14] Sri Lanka, and Ḥawwāʾ was sent down to Jeddah, a city whose name means 'grandmother' because Ḥawwāʾ is the grandmother of all of humanity. In either case they were separated from one another for a period of time.

Prophet Ādam and Lady Ḥawwāʾ, now separated, had to find their way back to each other on foot. The walk was long, and Ḥawwāʾ was only able to go a short distance at a time. Prophet Ādam walked day and night for forty years on Earth to find his wife. At the end of their journey toward each other, they met in ʿArafāt on the Mountain of Mercy—*Jabal ar-Raḥmah*.[15] This mountain is named *Raḥmah* because when Prophet Ādam was asking for forgiveness and seeking repentance *(ṭawbah)* for his mistake, Allah revealed to him His Beautiful Names (*al-Asmāʾ al-Ḥusnā)*.

Through this, the mercy of Allah was revealed in the form of a supplication *(duʿāʾ)* where Prophet Ādam received these 'words'—known in Arabic as *kalimāt*—from his Lord.[16] These *kalimāt* have three main components: Seeking intercession of the Ahlul Bayt, acknowledging one's shortcomings, and seeking Allah's pardon.

Therefore, when Prophet Ādam and Lady Ḥawwāʾ met, they supplicated and repented at the foot of this Mountain of Mercy. It is narrated that Prophet Muḥammad also used to supplicate along the hillside of this mountain, as well as other Prophets such as Prophet Ibrāhīm.[17] It is recommended *(mustaḥab)* to supplicate along the mountain's hillside, but it is apprehensible *(makrūh)* to climb to the top of this mountain.

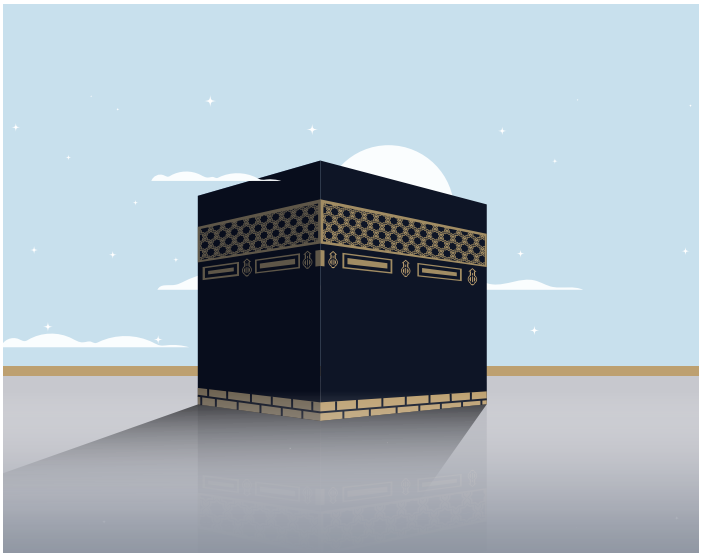
Jabal ar-Raḥmah is a sacred place because Allah's special mercy falls here. It has been narrated in traditions that Angel Jibrāʾīl came to Prophet Ādam who had spent 40 days on his own crying and repenting to Allah, and took him to ʿArafāt where he repented until sunset. He then took him to another place, Mashʿar, where on the morning of Eid al-Aḍḥā, his repentance was accepted through the Beautiful Names of Allah (*al-Asmāʾ al-Ḥusnā)*.[18]

Prophet Ādam then made a covenant with Allah and prayed to Him saying:

> "O Allah, from now onward, since You gave me this privilege of being Your vicegerent/ representative *(khalīfatullāh)* on the Earth, help me fulfill this duty."

After this, he and wife continued to Minā, then Mecca.

In Mecca, Allah commanded Prophet Ādam to make the Kaʿbah[19]—the House of Allah. The Prophet now found complete tranquility as he established Allah's House and his own family's home side by side in Divine Unity *(Tawḥīd)* and submission.



13 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī,* Vol. 4, P. 192.
14 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 11, P. 143.
15 Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr,*Tārīkh aṭ-Ṭabarī,* Vol. 1, Pp. 121-122.
16 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 37.
17 Kurdī, Muḥammad Ṭāhir, *At-Tārīkh al-Qawīm*, Vol. 5, P. 341.
18 Qummī, ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, Vol. 1, P. 45.
19 Al-Qummī, Shaykh ʿAbbās, *Waqāʾiʿ al-Ayyām*, P. 88.

Activity 3.1a: Class Discussion

In the worksheet below, identify the 'type of arrogance' this kind of behavior falls under. Recall what we have discussed so far:

1. Arrogance against Allah ﷻ.
2. Arrogance against the Noble Prophet ﷺ or the 12 Imāms ؑ.
3. Arrogance against other people.

Scenario	Type of Arrogance	Where I may have experienced it in my life
Shayṭān chose not to prostrate down to Prophet Ādam ؑ when Allah ﷻ commanded him to do so.		
A man cursed Imām al-Bāqir ؑ and his mother, and said to the Imām ؑ that they are not Muslims.		
Daniyah tells Umamah that her worship is better than Umamah's because Daniyah got a better grade in Sunday School.		
Naim does not do *wuḍūʾ* properly because he does not think that it is necessary for *ṣalāh*.		
Leena thinks that the Prophet ﷺ did not know what today's society would be like, so his advice does not apply to her life right now.		

Now, write a few sentences on how you can try and keep yourself away from these types of arrogant and proud behaviors.

Activity 3.1b: Review Questions

1. Prophet Ādam ﷺ disobeyed a command of Allah ﷻ that was:

   a. A law
   b. An advice
   c. Both of the above

2. Lady Ḥawwāʾ:

   a. Was responsible for instigating Prophet Ādam ﷺ to commit a sin
   b. Disobeyed the law of Allah ﷻ
   c. Ate from the tree along with Prophet Ādam ﷺ

3. Pride is bad because:

   a. It is the source of other evil acts
   b. *Shayṭān* was proud
   c. It can destroy good actions
   d. All of the above

4. Choose one lesson that we can learn from the story of the angels bowing down to Prophet Ādam ﷺ, and *Shayṭān* refusing to do so. Write down the lesson and briefly explain why you chose this one. How can you apply this lesson to your own life?

3.2 Prophet Nūḥ's Perseverance

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Outline the major events in the life of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ up to the flood.
- Identify the perseverance of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ through the time and effort that he spent on guiding his people.
- Compare and contrast good perseverance with incorrect perseverance.
- Analyze the importance and role of perseverance in learning and other daily activities.

Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān:
It was said: 'O Nūḥ! Disembark in peace from Us and with [Our] blessings upon you.' [1]

"Peace be upon Nūḥ, throughout the nations!" [2]

Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ was one of the earliest Prophets sent by Allah ﷻ to a group of people who were worshiping idols, and who had gone astray in their actions and beliefs.

In another place in the Qur'ān, Allah ﷻ says:
Indeed, We sent Nūḥ to his people [saying]: 'Warn your people before a painful punishment overtakes them.' [3]

Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ was a Prophet and a Messenger who received revelation, and had the responsibility of guiding his people to the right path. He is also among one of the five Prophets with firm resolve *(Ulul ʿAzm)* who came with a message and a book of laws for the people to follow.

PROPHET NŪḤ ﷺ: AN EXAMPLE OF PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance means 'to have steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, or a state—in spite of the difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement that it may entail.' This means to not give up on the truth—no matter how difficult things may become. Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ was a man who never gave up on his mission to guide his people to the right path, despite the difficulties that he had to endure.

Let us see how Allah ﷻ mentions Prophet Nūḥ's perseverance in the Qurʾān.

This Prophet ﷺ has been introduced to us as a symbol of patience. The reason behind this is that he preached the message of Allah ﷻ for 950 years, and only a few people believed in him (according to one narration, it says only 80 individuals). The Qurʾān says that he was a Prophet who used common sense and logic, spoke kind words, and was very gentle and compassionate to his people. However, even after so many years of preaching and teaching, most of the people did not listen to him.

STOP AND REFLECT: Do you think it was easy for Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ to persevere with his people and not give up on them?

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Hūd (11), Verse 48.
2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt (37), Verse 79.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Nūḥ (71), Verse 1.

All of his followers were poor people, because the wealthy people were too proud to listen to what this Prophet ﷺ had to say.

Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān about Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ:

He said: 'O my people, worship Allah! You have no other god besides Him. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous day.' [4]

The chiefs of the people laughed at Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ. One of their leaders stepped forth and said:

'You are nothing but a man like us. We do not see anything special about you. You have only a few followers and they are the poorest and the lowest among us. We do not think that you are any better than we are; in fact, we think you are (all) liars!' [5]

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some of the reasons that people might think "regular people" cannot be Prophets? Why did this happen to almost all of the Prophets?

The chiefs thought that just because they had a lot of money, they were 'better' than Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ and his followers. They used this as an excuse not to believe. The leaders of the town became upset and angry because Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ made some good and convincing arguments. Then, they challenged Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ to keep his word about a chastisement.

They said: 'O Nūḥ, you have disputed with us already, and you have disputed with us exceedingly. Now bring (upon) us what you threaten us with, should you be of the truthful ones.' [6]

The Qurʾān then describes what Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ felt after so much time and effort that he spent with these stubborn people:

He said: 'My Lord! Indeed, I invited my people (to the truth) night and day, but my invitation only increased their evasion. Indeed, whenever I invited them so that You may forgive them, they would put their fingers into their ears and draw their cloaks over their heads, and they were persistent [in their disobedience], and disdainful in [their] arrogance.' [7]

4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (7), Verse 59.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Hūd (11), Verse 27.
6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Hūd (11), Verse 32.
7 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Nūḥ (71), Verses 5-9.

After preaching and being patient for 950 years,[8] Prophet Nūḥ's people reached the stage where no one else would believe anymore. Allah ﷻ knew that no more people would come to believe even if they were given more time. In fact, if they had been given more time, they would have misled those who had already believed. Thus, Allah ﷻ revealed to Nūḥ ؑ to build an ark. His people started mocking and ridiculing him, but he simply kept quiet and continued to do his job as commanded by the Almighty. The details of this can be found in Sūrah Hūd and Sūrah Nūḥ.

Prophet Nūḥ ؑ then asked Allah ﷻ not to leave a single trace of them on the Earth:

And Nūḥ said: 'My Lord! Leave not upon the land any dweller from among the unbelievers.' [9]

Then a huge flood began. Even after the flood began, people were given a chance to embark upon the ark. Prophet Nūḥ ؑ was ordered to take his family (except his son) with him, along with a pair of each domestic animal, and the people who believed in Nūḥ ؑ.

When Our edict came and the oven gushed [a stream of water], We said: 'Carry in it a pair of every kind [of animal], along with your family—except those [of them] against whom the edict has already been given—and those who have faith.' And none believed in him except a few. [10]

Allah ﷻ therefore destroyed all of the disbelievers, including the son of Prophet Nūḥ ؑ who refused to believe in Allah ﷻ, by drowning them in the flood. He saved Prophet Nūḥ ؑ and those who believed with him through the Ark that He had guided them to build.

8 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt (29), Verse 14.
9 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Nūḥ (71), Verse 26.
10 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Hūd (11), Verse 40.

AL-ISTIQĀMAH (PERSEVERANCE)

It is important to note the difference between perseverance and effort. There are some people who will make an effort in the beginning of something, but they then break down when confronted with difficulties. This is an example of effort without perseverance. We should not just start a task, and then give up too easily. Instead, we should be firm in our motivation and determination, and try our best to overcome any obstacles that we might face and work through them. This is one of the lessons that we learn from the story of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ.

PERSEVERE: To persist in anything undertaken; maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles, or discouragement; continue steadfastly.

STOP AND REFLECT: Reflect on a time when you demonstrated great effort, but no perseverance. What about a time when you demonstrated strong perseverance? What was different about these two instances?

Every triumph is not of the same kind. Sometimes it arrives early and sometimes it takes a long time. One must not expect that everything will be done in the same manner and that everything will end in success.

STOP AND REFLECT: How can persevering in life help a person become a better Muslim?

A great Muslim scholar narrates the following story:

I learnt firm determination from an insect called a scorpion. Once I was sitting near a clean and shining pillar in the masjid when I observed that a tiny insect was attempting to climb an upright stone pillar to reach a lamp that was on the top. I sat the entire night until dawn observing how relentlessly that insect was struggling to climb up the slippery column. I counted 700 attempts that it made after it kept falling down from the middle of the path because the pillar was very smooth and glassy. Its legs could not hold on to the pillar. I was extremely astonished to see the extraordinary determination of that tiny little insect. Since it was time for Fajr, I got up from my place, performed wuḍūʾ, and engaged myself in worship. After concluding my prayers, I looked back toward the pillar to find to my absolute astonishment that, as a result of its perseverance and untiring effort, the insect had achieved its aim and was sitting close to the burning light! [11]

11 Bazrafshān, Murtaḍā, *Ṣad Ḥekāyat Tarbiatī*, P. 44.

THE ROLE OF PERSEVERANCE IN LEARNING

The story of a famous 7th century scholar, Sakkaki, is also very interesting. He was a blacksmith who, with great difficulty, made an exquisite gift for the king of his time. When he went to deliver it, the king was very pleased with what he saw. Just then, someone else came into the court and everyone showed him a great deal of respect.

Sakkaki asked about the person, and people told him that he was one of the scholars. Sakkaki became enchanted with the idea of gaining knowledge, so he went to the local school to begin to study at the age of 30. His teachers were not at all hopeful that he would succeed, but he was filled with zeal and enthusiasm. In order to test the extent of his intelligence, a teacher asked him to memorize the following line: "The teacher says that the skin of a dog becomes clean and pure by tanning."

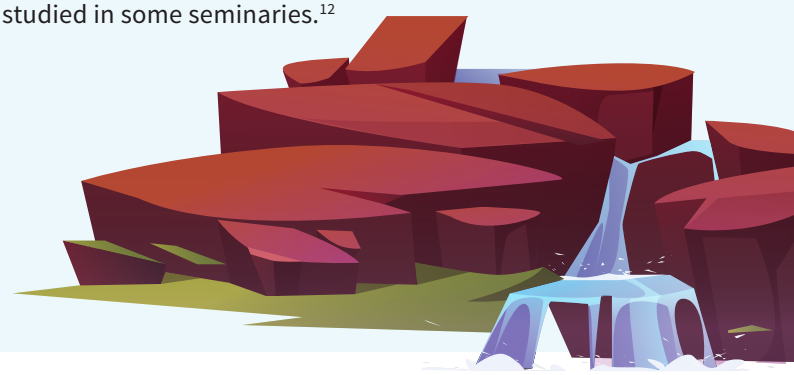
Sakkaki was supposed to learn this sentence by heart. He repeated it many times, and was ready to recite it when he was called upon. The next day, the teacher asked him to recite the sentence in front of all of the other students. He stood up at once and said: "The dog says the teacher's skin becomes clean and pure by tanning." Hearing this, everyone, including the teacher, burst into laughter.

12 Sadaqat, Sayyid Ali Akbar, *Anecdotes for Reflection*, Part 1, Ch. 6, Citing the Persian-language work *Dastan-e-Ma* (Our Stories).

However, this experience did not make him give up studying, and he followed the same course for another ten years. But naturally, due to him aging, his power to learn and understand was becoming weaker day by day.

One day, he went into the forest to study where he noticed that the constant drops of rainwater falling on a rock had made marks upon it. He thought about it and told himself: *My heart is not harder than this rock. If drops of knowledge fall on it constantly like these raindrops, then they too will certainly leave imprints on it, at least to some extent.* He returned home and began to study even harder.

At last, as a result of his own perseverance and with the help of Allah ﷻ, even though he was originally Persian, he became a distinguished personality in the literary circles of the Arab world. He authored the book, *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm*, which for many years was the primary textbook in Arabic grammar, and is still studied in some seminaries.[12]



STOP AND REFLECT: In what circumstances can perseverance be detrimental?

Continuing to sin, or persisting in hurting the lives of yourself or others' can be very dangerous. For example, if someone has severe internal bleeding after a skiing accident, then insists on skiing a difficult course the next weekend, this would be considered completely foolish, rather than persevering.

In one of the Qurʾānic verses, we see that Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ tells Allah ﷻ: "And they were persistent [in their disbelief]." [13] Even the Qurʾān acknowledges that there are certain types of perseverance which can be harmful for human beings.

Perseverance in righteous things is among the distinctive features of a true believer. Allah ﷻ has given glad tidings to those who observe fortitude and persevere in their affairs. In fact, this is one of the best means of leading a prosperous life, and having success in this world and the hereafter.

Imām ʿAlī ﷺ has said:

> "One who is steadfast (perseveres) shall attain Paradise." [14]

13 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Nūḥ (71), Verse 7.
14 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 119.

Activity 3.2a: The Perseverance of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ

In the space below, draw Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ and the ark. Your illustration should portray the perseverance of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ.

You may choose to include people walking by and ridiculing Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ, and the handful of supporters who helped him; or you can show people boarding the ship as the heavy rain begins to pour down.

Activity 3.2b: Duʿāʾ of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ

The Qur'ān quotes the supplication of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ as follows:

أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ

I have been overcome (I am overpowered), so help [me]. [15]

Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ did not ask Allah ﷻ why this calamity was happening to him. His simple and eloquent prayer *(duʿāʾ)* can be applied to our own lives very easily.

Below, describe a time when you felt overwhelmed (do not share with others). Then, recite this supplication in a whisper. After that, specifically write what you would have needed in that situation to feel less overwhelmed.

15 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Qamar (54), Verse 10.

Activity 3.2c: Review Questions

1. How long did Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ guide and preach to his people for:
   a. 2000 years
   b. 950 years
   c. 300 years

2. Why did Prophet Nūḥ's son also get punished and drown?
   a. He disbelieved in Allah ﷻ
   b. He thought he could swim out of the flood
   c. He tried to save other people

3. What is the most important lesson that we can learn from Prophet Nūḥ's life?
   a. We should always remain firm and persevere in the path of Allah ﷻ
   b. We should train our children to be more obedient
   c. We should pray to Allah ﷻ to punish the bad people immediately

CHAPTER 4

Contemporary Muslims

4.1 Our Scholars (ʿUlamāʾ)

4.1 Our Scholars (ʿUlamāʾ)

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Review the meaning of **true** knowledge.
- Compare and contrast the role of the scholars *(ʿulamāʾ)* to the roles of the Immaculate ones *(Maʿṣūmīn)* ﷺ.
- Explain the difference between modeling and copying, and what purpose the scholars should have in our communities.
- Analyze the life of the great scholar, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī.

STOP AND REFLECT: What does it mean to have **true** knowledge?

In a narration *(ḥadīth)*, speaking about the importance of knowledge, the Prophet ﷺ said: "The people who are the closest in rank to that of Prophethood are the people of knowledge and striving."[1]

There are many other *ḥadīth* which speak about the significance and beauty of learning in Islam:

- The Prophet ﷺ said: "The quest for knowledge is incumbent *(wājib)* upon every Muslim."[2]
- Imām ʿAlī ﷺ said: "Knowledge is life."[3]
- The Prophet ﷺ said: "A little bit of knowledge is better than a lot of worship."[4]
- The Prophet ﷺ said: "Verily everything seeks forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, including the fish in the sea, the reptiles on the land, and the predators and livestock on the earth."[5]

> *"A little bit of knowledge is better than a lot of worship."*
>
> – The Noble Prophet ﷺ

ʿULAMĀʾ: OUR CONNECTION TO THE MAʿṢŪMĪN ﷺ

The true and pious *ʿulamāʾ* are our connection to the *Maʿṣūmīn* ﷺ because they have spent their lives studying Islam, acting upon it, and teaching it to others. They have studied the Sciences of *Ḥadīth*, History, Qurʾān, etc., in order to gain a deep understanding of these topics.

They want to guide and teach us toward the correct understanding and practices of Islam. This makes them the general representatives of Islam because what they say is listened to by the people—that is why a scholar (an *ʿālim)* has to be very careful not to make incorrect judgments/statements in regards to religion because it will misguide others. Our 12th and current Imām, Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف, has said: "They (the righteous, knowledgeable scholars) are my proof *(ḥujjah)* upon you, and I am the proof *(ḥujjah)* of Allah upon them."[6]

1 Muttaqī Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl,* Ḥadīth #10647.
2 Ḥillī, Warrām ibn Abī Firās, *Tanbīh al-Khawāṭir wa Nuzhat an-Nawāẓir,* Vol. 2, P. 176.
3 Laythī Wāsiṭī, ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad, *ʿUyūn al-Ḥikam,* Vol. 1, P. 30.
4 Shahīd ath-Thānī, *Munyat al-Murīd,* P. 105.
5 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 1, P. 164.
6 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 53, P. 181.

In this saying, *ḥujjah* means 'proof, evidence, and representative.' Due to the presence of pious scholars, no one will be able to complain that the Imām ﷺ of our time did not have any representatives or proof of his being the Imām ﷺ.

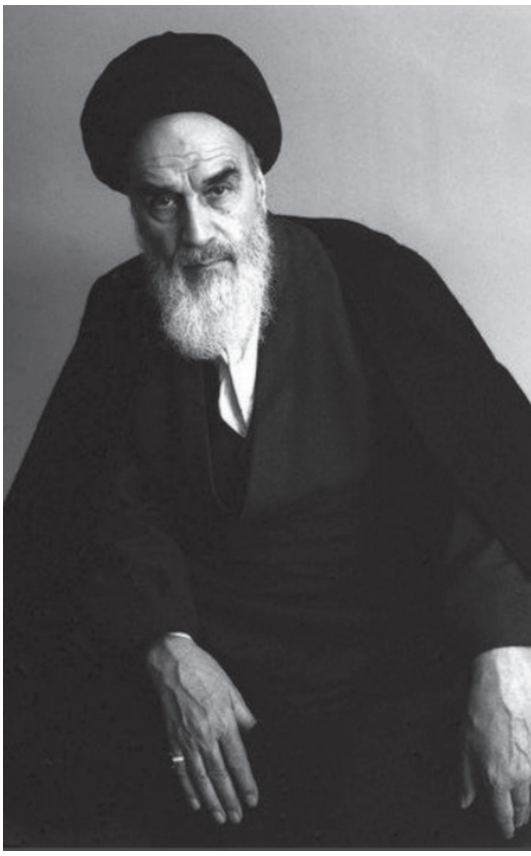
In addition, we can trust the *Risālah* (Book of Laws) of the *marājiʿ* because they are derived from the Qurʾān and the narrations of the *Maʿṣūmīn* ﷺ—it is not "created" by them, but rather extracted from reliable sources. Without this Book of Laws, we would not know the basics of how to worship Allah ﷻ!

AKHLĀQ:
morals and etiquettes

ROLE MODELS

STOP AND REFLECT: What does it mean that our scholars are role models? How are they different from other people who are normally taken as role models?

True and pious scholars serve as role models who show us the path toward the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ because of how they live and act. Unlike other role models who usually only model for us in a specific area or maybe a few areas (e.g. a basketball athlete, a teacher, etc.), most of our *ʿulamāʾ* are holistic role models because they show us how to practice Islam, and Islam touches on all areas of one's life. We can see it in how they study and learn, how they treat others, how they interact with their families, how they organize their lives, their carefulness in regards to worshiping Allah ﷻ *(ʿibādah)*, and all other areas of life. They are especially role models when it comes to morals and etiquettes *(akhlāq)*.


Āyatullāh Khomeini

Let us look at the example of Āyatullāh Khomeini. When he was alive, he never passed on his tasks to other people to perform, nor did he ever request others to do things for him—he did whatever needed to be done by himself. Whenever he noticed from his roof (many Iranian homes have roofs in such a way that you can go on top of them) that the bathroom light was left on inside he would not ask his wife, children, or anyone else to turn it off, rather he himself would go down three flights of stairs and turn it off.

Likewise, whenever he needed a pen or something else from upstairs, he would not even ask his children to get it for him. In the 60 years that he lived with his wife, not once did he request her to bring him a glass of water; instead, he would always get it himself. Of course, it was not wrong if he occasionally asked his wife or children to get him something, and doing so would be quite normal, and of course they would have gladly wanted to help him out and earn the rewards from Allah ﷻ for doing so. However, his standards were so high, and his respect for them was so much that he did not even allow himself to do that. Perhaps, he also wanted to set an example so that other individuals would not expect people to serve them.

ROLE MODELS IN WHAT AREAS?

Although true scholars can be role models for us in many areas, two in particular stand out—education and character.

1. Education

The first thing we think about regarding *ʿulamāʾ* is their education. It is having a deep understanding of Islam, and acting upon it that makes someone truly a scholar *(an ʿālim)*. Their dedication and diligence in their education serves as an example for us **no matter** what field or topic they are learning about.

2. Character

Islam is our life map. It guides us toward self-perfection and living the best life possible, the biggest part of that being one's character *(akhlāq)*. *Akhlāq* has so much significance in the religion of Islam, that is one of the reasons why Islam was sent. Divine religions (those sent by God, rather than created by human beings) serve two main functions: (1) teach people how to know Allah ﷻ; and (2) guide people to reflect Allah's qualities and characteristics—the latter of which is *akhlāq*. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that he was sent so that he may complete for us (teach us) the highest of virtues.

The pious scholars serve as some of our greatest examples of *akhlāq* because their whole lives are focused on learning Islam and practicing it, and this shines in their characters.

It has been reported that ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī never mentioned anyone's name with ill-feelings, nor did he ever mention anything negative about anyone—he always prayed for the well-being of others. He was also very humble, and whenever he was asked a question, he would answer it. But if he did not know the answer, then he would say without any shame: "I do not know." In fact, even when he did have a response, he would first say: "I am not completely sure"—perhaps because he wanted to acknowledge that despite whatever he did know, there was always room to know more! Most people do not like to admit that they do not know something, so instead when they are asked about a particular thing (that they may not really know much about), they try to come up with a creative answer.

When he was with his students, if someone would refer to him as *ustādh* (professor) he would say: "I do not like this title! We have gathered here as colleagues in thought so that we might discover the truths of Islam."[7]

His behavior and morals even at home were outstanding, and this shows the high level of love, respect, and concern that he had for his family. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's daughter narrates:

His [my father] behavior with my mother was incredibly respectful and friendly. Through his actions, it seemed as if he was always eager to see my mother. We never saw them order each other around to do or not do something, nor did we see any discord between the two of them. They were very loving, loyal, and forgiving to each other to such an extent that we thought they never disagreed on anything. The two of them were truly like best friends with one another.

Prior to her death, my mother was ill and confined to bed for 27 days. During this period, my father did not leave her bedside for a single moment. He left all of his work to take care of her.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why are education and etiquettes (or character) considered such important categories to have role models to follow like our scholars? Why can we not just make any person a role model in these areas?

MODELING VS. COPYING

To model is not the same as copying. Copying is not what we are supposed to do with our scholars. They are models for us in the principles and values which they follow, not necessarily the exact specific behaviors that result from those principles.

Every situation is different, so we need to extract the qualities that we can learn from our righteous scholars, but imitating their behavior may not be appropriate.

7 Ahmad Luqmani, *Eternal Manifestations: 80 Stories from the life of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī*, Ch. 2.

ʿULAMĀʾ ARE NOT THE MAʿṢŪMĪN ﷺ

Although scholars are great role models for people in many areas of life, this does not mean they are completely perfect role models. We cannot look at them the way we look at the Prophets ﷺ and the Imāms ﷺ, taking every action and word of theirs as divine and on the correct path.

Additionally, just because they are learned in Islam it does not mean that they know everything there is to know about Islam, nor can answer every question—only a Divine guide appointed by Allah ﷻ can do that. Someone once asked a scholar a question to which he did not know the answer. The man got angry that he could not answer the question, so he asked the scholar why he wore the turban *(ʿamāmah)* on his head and called himself a scholar, but could not reply to his inquiry. The scholar told him: "This turban signifies what I do know—if I were to wear a turban showing what I do not know, then it would be so big that I would not even be able to wear it!"

STOP AND REFLECT: What do you think is meant by the above statement?

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

There are good and bad in everything, and likewise is the case with scholars. There are good, righteous scholars who have studied, and continue to study hard and carefully for the sake of Allah ﷻ. They practice what they preach and persevere in their learning. They are humble, and if they make mistakes they apologize and acknowledge their faults.

STOP AND REFLECT: Some people say that we should be able to learn good content from anyone—regardless of their character. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

There are other people who may have studied, but either for ulterior motives, or they did not study properly or carefully, and/or they do not practice what they know. They might be tricked by *Shayṭān* to use their position to serve themselves or others, instead of serving Allah ﷻ. The Qurʾān and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ have condemned such people. That is why we should always be careful not to just look at the clothing a person wears or how well they speak, but to also be sure about their qualifications and their character before placing our trust in them.

CONCLUSION: SURROUND YOURSELF WITH WHAT YOU WISH TO BECOME

Imagine that you are a sponge, and like a sponge you absorb everything around you. You would only want to surround yourself with good and clean things. This is precisely how our souls/minds/hearts work—whatever we expose ourselves to will affect us in some way or another—be it small or great. Just like the saying goes: "You are what you eat"—the parallel for the soul would be: "You are what (or who) you surround yourself with."

The soul will be colored by its environment and what one engages oneself in. Therefore, if you want to change your thoughts, your qualities, and your values for the better, then you have to surround yourself with things and people who are better. Surround yourself with the things and people you want to become. In this way, surrounding ourselves with the true and good scholars will be a remedy for our soul, not only because we can learn from their words, but we can also pick up positive things from their behavior and character. The more time we spend in their presence, the more we will see our values and priorities begin to match up with theirs and in the way of Islam, and we can slowly maximize our full potential. If you want to reach perfection, then associate yourselves with those who have studied to be experts in it—the true and pious scholars of Islam!

Our scholars want to spend time with us and educate us. The responsibility they have toward the knowledge they acquired is to share this knowledge with others and help them become better human beings through it. A lot of us have questions about religion, or there are some things that make us uncomfortable, or there may be certain aspects of the religion that we do not understand or wish were different, or things we struggle with, and so on. Talking and spending time with scholars can help significantly in this area. They are happy to help and talk with you no matter who you are, whatever your age, whichever country you live in, whatever religion you follow, or any level of religiousness you have, etc.—so long as you are sincere.

ʿULAMĀʾ SPOTLIGHT: ʿALLĀMAH ṬABĀṬABĀʾĪ

The late ʿAllāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī was born in Tabriz, Iran, in 1904, and was from a lineage of great scholars. By the age of nine, both his mother and father had passed away, making him an orphan. He completed some of his studies in Tabrīz before moving to Najaf, Iraq, where some of the greatest scholars taught at that time. In 1934, he moved to Qum, Iran—which is now the city and center of knowledge—where he spent the remainder of time in this world, until he passed away in 1981, at the age of 77.

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's most renowned work is *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, a 20 volume commentary on the Qurʾān, which is one of the greatest *tafsīr* ever to be written. While others use their own thinking, *ḥadīth*, or even logic to provide commentary, his primary approach was to use the Qurʾān itself. Imām ʿAlī ﷺ said about the Qurʾān: "One part of it speaks with the other, and one portion testifies about the other."[8] This method of *tafsīr* is known as *'Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bil Qurʾān'*—Tafsīr of the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān.'

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī wrote this *tafsīr* because there were not enough people in the Islamic Seminary *(Ḥawzah)* studying the Qurʾān. He is reported to have said: "At that time, *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān was not being addressed, in fact, it was not even considered worthy of study…teaching *tafsīr* was considered having weak qualifications! However, I knew I could not use this as an excuse in front of Allah ﷻ, so I continued my studies until I completed the writing of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*."

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī is an example of someone who reached closeness *(qurb)* to Allah ﷻ, and is an inspiration for all of us to follow the same path. He understood the depths of the Qurʾān because he was so close to the Qurʾān himself, and he acted upon its knowledge. Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī said about him: "'ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's behavior was one that conformed completely with the Qurʾān. Perhaps it can be said that his behavior had **become** the Qurʾān. Every verse that Allah ﷻ placed in the Qurʾān describing a perfect human being, we found it in ʿAllāmah's behavior, to the extent that it is possible to be seen in an individual..."

He had a deep respect for his wife, about whom he said: "It was this woman who allowed me to reach this position. She was my partner, and whatever books I have written, half [of the credit] belongs to her." His daughter said that ʿAllāmah did not like for anyone else to do his personal tasks for him: "Even in the end when he was sick, he would get up from his place to pour his own tea despite the state of his illness. If I objected and said: 'Why did you not ask me to bring you some tea?' he would reply: 'No, you are a guest, and you are also a descendant of the Prophet ﷺ [since you are Sayyidah], so I cannot give you any orders!'"[9]

He observed this kind of humility with his students as well. He often sat on the floor without keeping his back against a wall, and insisted that others lead the prayers. Āyatullāh Ibrahīm Amīnī once said about him: "He used to teach his classes calmly and quietly, never raising his voice. He became familiar and made friends with others very quickly. He was so friendly with everyone—even a new student—that others would think they were two dear friends."

This is only a glimpse at the life and teachings of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī. Another one of his closest students, Shahīd Muṭahharī, said about him: "'ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī is an exemplary man of worth and greatness. This man is so remarkable and worthy that even after 100 years it will be necessary to sit, ponder, and analyze his thoughts in order to fully understand his worth." We should try to embody the example of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī by practicing what we know about Islam, slowly building ourselves through doing what is obligatory *(wājib)*, staying away from what is forbidden *(ḥarām)*, and fulfilling our responsibilities toward others.

8 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 10, P. 121.
9 *Eternal Manifestations: 80 Stories from the life of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī,* Ch. 4.

Activity 4.1a: Review Questions

1. What is the difference between modeling and copying a role model?

2. Why are our scholars *(ʿulamāʾ)* considered great, but not perfect role models?

3. Explain the three important areas where we need a great role model and why.

Activity 4.1b: Explaining the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān (Tafsīr Qurʾān bil Qurʾān)

Below, we will examine one of the first sections of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* in which the first verse of the first *Sūrah (Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm)* is explained.

"Ar-Raḥmān, Ar-Raḥīm" (The All-Beneficent and the All-Merciful) are two adjectives derived from *ar-raḥmah* (**الرحمة**)—which means 'mercy.'

When you see that someone is suffering from a deficiency which they cannot remove by themself, the reaction that you experience which tells you to provide them with what they need in order to make up for that deficiency, is called mercy.

Ultimately, mercy means giving or bestowing something to fulfill another person's needs.

This latter meaning is the attribute used for Allah ﷻ.

Ar-Raḥmān—translated here as 'the All-Beneficent'—relates to that All-Encompassing Mercy of Allah ﷻ which is bestowed upon the believers and the unbelievers alike.

It is used in the Qurʾān mostly in this meaning. Allah ﷻ says: "The All-Beneficent (God) is Firm in Power." [10]

Ar-Raḥīm—translated here as 'the All-Merciful'—is more appropriate for that mercy which shall remain forever, the perpetual, inexhaustible mercy that will be bestowed on the believers in the life hereafter.

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'ān: "…and He is All-Merciful to the believers." [11] and "Surely to them (i.e.,the believers) He is All-Kind, All-Merciful." [12]

This is why it is said that the Mercy of *ar-Rahmān* is common for the believers and the unbelievers, but the Mercy of *ar-Rahīm* is reserved only for the believers.

1. In the passage above, highlight where this method of doing commentary *(tafsīr)* using other verses *(āyah)* is most obvious to you.

10 Noble Qurʿān, Sūrah Ṭāhā (20), Verse 5.
11 Noble Qurʿān, Sūrah al-Aḥzāb (33), Verse 43.
12 Noble Qurʿān, Sūrah at-Tawbah (9), Verse 117.

2. Compare and contrast the meaning of *ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm* that ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī is describing.

3. Did this passage from *Al-Mīzān* help you to understand better this first verse of the first sūrah? Explain why or why not.

AKHLĀQ
(ETIQUETTE)

CHAPTER 1

Mind, Body and Soul

1.1 Practically Achieving Our Purpose

1.2 Balance and Moderation

1.3 Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence

1.1 Practically Achieving Our Purpose

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Analyze the perspectives of celebrities and what their purpose in life is.
- Identify the real purpose of life.
- Identify the meaning of true happiness.
- Compare and contrast the perspectives of celebrities to those of the true role models.

SUPPLEMENTAL VIDEO:

https://bit.ly/3psmBLe
(Start at 1:21; end at 3:47)

Activity 1.1a: Pre-Reading Reflection

Answer the following questions in pairs, or as a class:

1. What do celebrities have that others do not have?
2. Is there a difference between how believers see a celebrity versus non-believers? If so, what is the main difference?
3. Do you think celebrities are typically satisfied with their lives?
4. Does what they have make them feel like they have achieved their full potential?

Typically, when most celebrities talk about themselves, they admit that their celebrity success has not given them much satisfaction in their lives, even though they have a lot of wealth and fame.

For example, in 2014, the founder of Minecraft purchased a 70 million dollar mansion in a neighborhood known as Billionaire's Row in California. It had a special wall just for candy, 14 bedrooms, 15 bathrooms, and a $5,600 toilet. The media reported that sometimes he spends $180,000 in one night on parties. Despite having access to so much wealth, he expressed his emotions on Twitter as follows:

Notch
@notch
Follow
The problem with getting everything is you run out of reasons to keep trying, and human interaction becomes impossible due to imbalance.
5:48 AM - 29 Aug 2015
1,679
2,631
Notch
@notch
Follow
Hanging out in ibiza with a bunch of friends and partying with famous people, able to do whatever I want, and I've never felt more isolated.
5:50 AM - 29 Aug 2015
1,130
2,016

When we look at the lives of celebrities, they tend to have almost everything imaginable in this world in a material sense. The founder of Minecraft was able to build his home with everything he could have desired. However, once he accomplished having a house like this, he was still not happy. What else could he possibly need?

STOP AND REFLECT: What is true happiness—if despite having vast amounts of wealth and fame—people still cannot attain it?

In reality, everything in this world is only temporary. This celebrity was trying to fulfill his eternal being with temporary happiness. He did not realize that he can only make his eternal being happy by pursuing what is the Absolute Infinite—which is only Allah ﷻ. This man made his material possessions—in this case his house and wealth—his goal in life, thinking that it would bring him happiness.

Happiness is an emotional state that is often commonly misunderstood by some people as being related to material possessions. However, these temporary, worldly things do not give a person true happiness. True happiness is found in being aligned with one's purpose in life. Obtaining real happiness comes with working hard while facing the difficulties of living life. In the Noble Qurʾān, the words *saʿādah* and *falāḥ* are used for true happiness, and they can be translated as: success, prosperity, and happiness.

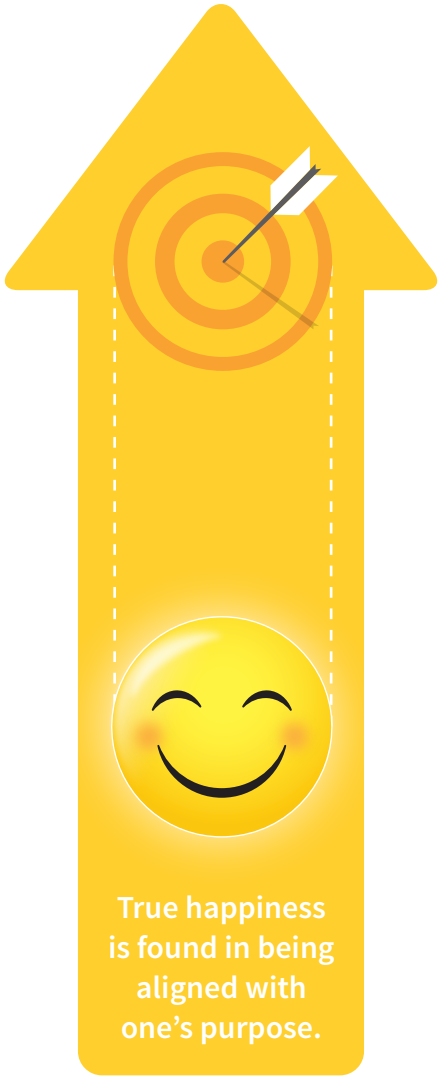
STOP AND REFLECT: In the calls to the daily prayers—*adhān* and *iqāmah*—we are encouraged to rush toward *falāḥ* (success, prosperity, and happiness) where is says: *"Ḥayyā ʿalal falāḥ."* What do you think the connection between prayer *(ṣalāh)* and prosperity *(falāḥ)* is?

Islam has taught us how to attain true happiness in our own lives. When Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was asked about true success or happiness (*saʿādah*), he replied: "A long life in obedience to Allah." Allah ﷻ is the All-Knowing and the All-Perfect Creator, and the path that He has chosen for us and guided us to—Islam—is the only thing that will lead us to true happiness. Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qur'ān in Sūrah Ṭāhā:

Then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray, nor will they be miserable. But whoever forgets (or turns away from) My remembrance will have a wretched (or straitened) life…[1]

Even if the circumstances in our lives are very difficult, or we have just a few material possessions, we can still feel happiness in knowing that we are striving toward a higher purpose and potential, and that Allah ﷻ is taking care of us. When we look at people whose goals and aims for success are only limited to this world, although they may obtain some temporary happiness, they will never have real happiness in those goals. Whereas in true happiness, one can live a life full of constant difficulties, but still be content and happy with what they have.

Consider, for example, the lives of our Ahlul Bayt ﷺ; even though they suffered so much in their lives and faced many difficulties, they were still happy knowing that they were on the path of Allah ﷻ.



1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Ṭāhā (20), Verses 123-124.

Activity 1.1b: Think, Pair, Share

With a partner, answer the following questions, then share your answers with the class:

1. How do people become celebrities? What is this usually based on?

2. Would it be fair if only celebrities could go to Heaven? Why or why not?

WHO ARE THE REAL CELEBRITIES?

People often become celebrities based on their looks, voices, or talents. If being a celebrity was **the** ticket to success, we would say that is not fair or just. Or if being a celebrity was the only way to get to Heaven, we would say this is injustice. If being rich and famous were where our successes came from, you could never be satisfied with your life unless you were a celebrity. We would have to ask, what about the people who do not have what it takes to become celebrities?

Islam teaches us that everyone can become a "celebrity" in the true sense of the word: meaning that when they achieve their God-given potential, and are celebrated by Allah ﷻ, the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, and the angels. Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'ān:

> "It is He who blesses you, and so do His angels, that He may bring you out from the darknesses into the light; and He is to the faithful, All-Merciful." [2]

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Verily Allah, the High, boasts about the worshiping of the young people to His angels, saying: 'Look at My servant! They have abandoned their desires for My sake.'" [3]

People who equate happiness to fame and fortune also find it difficult to go through hardships like sickness, aging, or loss of popularity. But no one is able to escape whatever Allah ﷻ has decreed for them, even if they have money and fame. People who are on the right path in terms of attaining their full potential come to terms with the realities of this world, and are able to bear the difficulties that it entails. They live much happier lives than some famous celebrities who base their lives on fake, unrealistic ideals.

Oftentimes, we are bombarded with information about the lives of Hollywood celebrities, and an image of who they are. We should look at the lives of the *shuhadā'*—those who lived and died in the way of Allah ﷻ—in order to understand a different way of living. If a person wants to become a martyr *(shahīd)*, they need to be very close to Allah ﷻ, and follow His guidelines about how to live one's life in His servitude and obedience.

STOP AND REFLECT: What kind of a person is able to become a martyr *(shahīd)*? Can you think of any examples?

2 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Aḥzāb (33), Verse 43.
3 Muttaqī Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, Ḥadīth #43057.

SHAHĪD BEHESHTĪ

One of the great martyrs *(shuhadāʾ)* in recent times is Shahīd Beheshtī. He was a great leader, and a very learned scholar who was killed in Iran in 1979.

Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Beheshti

He tried to seek knowledge from a very young age. When he was fourteen years old, he started studying Theology in the Ṣadr Theology School of Iṣfahān in Iran. As a scholar, he would prepare thoroughly in order to be able to share his knowledge with other people. He took advantage of every moment he could find to study and learn in order to be thorough in his research. Once, he was invited to an academic conference where he was asked to prove that the Qurʾān, unlike the Bible and the Torah, is the original revelation of Allah ﷻ, and has never been altered by human beings. As part of his thorough preparation for this conference, he read 82 books in English, not to mention other books and articles in various languages.

Another time, Shahīd Beheshtī started a weekly discussion session with four university professors on the topic of Economics. After a few months, the professors admitted that their knowledge about Economics was shallow. Instead of discussing Economics together like they were all peers, they wanted to become Shahīd Beheshtī's students, and turn the discussion session into a class. Due to the attention that a true ḥawzah student gives to subjects, Shahīd Beheshtī knew it in a lot of depth, and the others wanted to learn it in detail right from the roots from him.

In an interview, Shahīd Beheshtī's wife once said: *"Despite my husband being very busy, it was not possible for him to arrive at a meeting later than the agreed upon time. He was very organized and punctual. He used to say: 'If we cannot be organized about our day-to-day affairs, then how can we possibly help the government to advance?'"* He was also very kind to his family. His wife said that she does not recall even a single incident where he became angry for no valid reason.

Shahīd Beheshtī used to tell his students: "Do not say that 'If only I had such-and-such a thing, I would do this…' Instead with whatever you have, ask yourself 'What is the best thing I can do?'"

Shahīd Beheshtī lived his life in a way that all of his actions were for the sake of Allah ﷻ. Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ؑ said: "Above every act of goodness is another act of goodness, until one were to be killed in the way of Allah. When one is killed in the way of Allah, the Magnificent and Exalted, there is no greater act than that."[4]

STOP AND REFLECT: What is meant by the above narration *(ḥadīth)* of the 6th Imām ؑ?

One of the meanings could be that people who live sincere, pure lives of truth, and are killed or die in this way have attained the highest act of goodness.

4 Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, *Wasāʾil ash-Shīʿah*, Vol. 11, P. 10.

REFLECTING ON OUR OWN LIVES

Through the resources that we have been given by Allah ﷻ, we have access to all sorts of role models. When we look at the celebrities who are adored by people today, we see that many of them lack true contentment; but on the other hand, we can find Islamic role models throughout the ages who inspire us to be better people. The lives of martyrs like Shahīd Beheshtī—who strove for righteous ideals and the truth, and used whatever time and blessings he was given by Allah ﷻ to spread His cause—give us a different perspective on what life is all about, and who truly shines in the view of Allah ﷻ.

When it comes to our own lives, we have to accept the reality of life in this world. We will be tested in this life because it is the way that Allah ﷻ has determined for us to grow and get closer to Him. Things will not always work out the way we expect them to, but this is a test from Allah ﷻ, and the ability to realize this is a great blessing from Allah ﷻ. When we do things, we have to realize and perform our own responsibilities *(taklīf)*, and have trust *(tawakkul)* in Allah ﷻ.

When we fulfill our responsibilities and have full trust in the plan of the Almighty, we will become closer to Him. We should try to do this in every aspect of our lives. When we are in school for example, we may not always get the grades that we are looking for, even if we try our best. We might get assigned to be with group partners who do not do their work, or have a hard time finding the right set of friends. All of these are tests from Allah ﷻ, even if we may not realize it. Getting past these trials, and realizing that our ultimate goal and purpose in life is closeness to Allah ﷻ, is how we will be able to grow.

TAKLĪF: responsibility

TAWAKKUL: trust

Activity 1.1c: Achieving our Goals

For this activity, we have listed some goals or purposes that people might be striving to achieve. Think of as many examples as you can of actions which a person might take to reach that goal. Start with small steps, then lead to bigger things. End with the most drastic actions that one needs to take.

GOAL	ACTIONS
Become the best at a video game	**Small:** Practice the video game every day. **Medium:** **Drastic:** Quit school/work to become the best at that video game.
Become the most famous person on Youtube	**Small:** **Medium:** Vlog everyday and pay $$ to promote your blogs. **Drastic:**
Be seen as the most beautiful/ attractive and stay youthful	**Small:** Start wearing sunscreen and get good moisturizing cream. **Medium:** **Drastic:**
Become a billionaire	**Small:** **Medium:** **Drastic:** Start a company that exploits people to get rich quick.

In the activity above, there is a clear relationship between the goals people have, and the actions that they are taking to achieve them. For example, if you are trying to be the best in a certain video game, then it is obvious from your actions how much you are prioritizing that goal. If you practice it once in a while, there may be other parts of your life that you are prioritizing. If you are quitting school to become the best at video games, then you are prioritizing video games in your life. When we reflect on our own actions, we need to see what we are prioritizing in life.

Activity 1.1d: Self-Reflection

Using the chart below, write a schedule of your typical day (either a school day or the weekend.)

TIME	SCHEDULE

Reflect on your schedule above, and answer the following questions:

1. Based on your schedule, what do you spend the most amount of time on?

2. What would you like to spend more time on?

Using the chart below, write a new schedule that you would like to begin applying.

TIME	SCHEDULE

1.2 Balance and Moderation

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Recognize that our body is a gift *(amānah)* from Allah ﷻ that we will be answerable for.
- Determine the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, including diet, exercise, hygiene, and sleep.
- Develop personal strategies for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

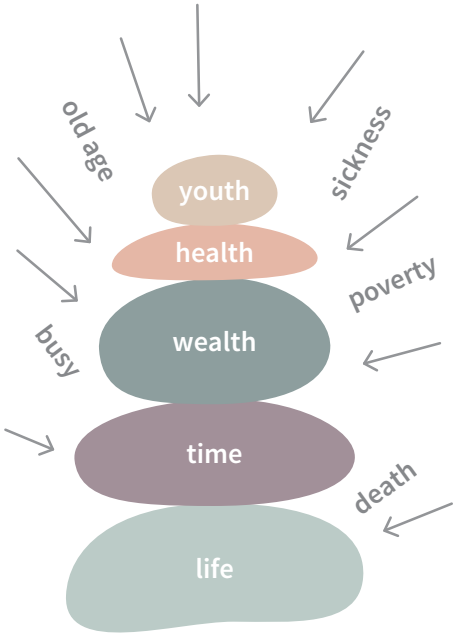
STOP AND REFLECT: Imagine someone gives you a nice shirt that you have really been wanting. What would you do? How would you take care of it?

Islam is a complete system which governs every aspect of our lives: personal, spiritual, health, wealth, political, and economical. Taking care of our physical body is a responsibility that Allah ﷻ has given us—it is a trust or gift *(amānah)* from Him for us to use in this world. Similar to how we should take care of a valuable gift that someone gives us, we must see the value in this blessing from Allah ﷻ and take care of our physical body. This includes paying attention to our diet, exercise, daily routine, hygiene, and self-grooming. We may consider a lot of these things common sense, but sometimes, as our routine changes or we become busy, these things are often easily forgotten.

STAYING BALANCED: HEALTHY LIFESTYLE IN ISLAM

STOP AND REFLECT: Why is it easier for a person to establish good habits when they are young and healthy?

The Prophet ﷺ gave the following advice to his close companion, Abū Dharr: "O Abū Dharr! Take advantage of five things before five things seize you: your youth before your old age; your health before your sickness; your wealth before your poverty; your spare time before you are busy; and your life before your death."[1]



The importance of being healthy does not mean that people who are sick or elderly are not as close to Allah ﷻ. Health is a gift from the Almighty, but both health and sickness can be a test. When we are young and healthy, sometimes we may not use our time wisely because we assume that we have 'tomorrow.'

STOP AND REFLECT: Have you ever met an elderly person who is very close to Allah ﷻ and prays often? How do some elderly people worship Allah ﷻ even when their health has declined with age?

It takes elderly people much more energy to do good deeds, but they have often established the habit of doing good deeds from when they were young.

The other parts of the Prophet's *ḥadīth* are also important for us when we are thinking about living a balanced life. Sustenance comes from Allah ﷻ, and we do not know whether we will still have what we have tomorrow, so we should spend what money we have wisely instead of squandering it on unnecessary things. When it comes to how we divide up our day, our spare time provides us with an opportunity to seek legitimate *(ḥalāl)* entertainment that can help motivate us during the rest of the day.

The last part of the *ḥadīth* emphasizes that we should take advantage of our life before our death, by working on all of these things, and making a better afterlife for ourselves.

1 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 74, P. 73.

HAVING A HEALTHY BALANCE

Islam is a perfect code of life, so naturally it gives us guidelines on how we should eat, drink, exercise, and even sleep.

ETIQUETTES OF EATING AND DRINKING

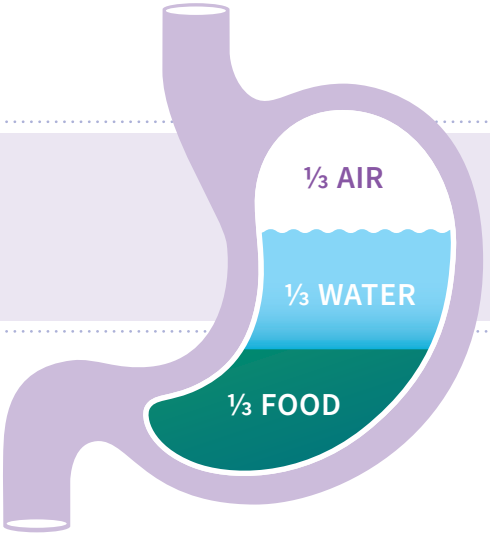
One verse of the Qurʾān that provides a general guideline for eating is:

...وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا...
...And eat and drink, but do not be extravagant...[2]

In terms of our physical health, it is good to eat a variety of foods. This includes fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, lentils, beans, etc. This means having a balanced diet: even too many vegetables can be a bad thing if we do not eat anything else!

We should also be moderate when it comes to how much we eat. Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said:

When you eat, divide a third of your stomach for food, a third for drink, and a third for air.[3]



Just like overeating can be harmful to our health, not eating enough can also be dangerous. It is important to provide our bodies with the nutrients that they need in order to thrive. By being conscious of ourselves every time we eat, we can learn how much we really need.

STOP AND REFLECT: Have you noticed that when you do not eat properly (by overeating, or undereating, or not eating the right types of food) it affects your mood and your performance?

2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (7), Verse 31.
3 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 6, P. 269, Ḥadīth #4.

Food should give us energy and motivation. If food is stopping us from doing our daily worship *(ʿibādah)* or other obligatory *(wājib)* actions, or from fulfilling our responsibilities, then we need to revisit our eating habits. We should also always make sure that the food we eat is permissible *(ḥalāl)* so that it is good for our body and soul. Just like the best car needs the best kind of gasoline and oil, similarly our bodies need the best fuel and food. Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān:

فَلْيَنظُرِ الْإِنسَانُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِ ۝.
So let the people observe their food.[4]

The word *"ṭaʿām"*—food—in this verse can be understood at different levels.

When we look into the commentary *(tafsīr)* of this verse, we learn that in addition to the physical food that we consume, we should also be aware of our spiritual consumption, like the knowledge we receive.

Imām Ḥasan al-Mujtabā ؑ said: "I am surprised at the person who thinks about what he eats (he makes sure that whatever goes into his stomach is wholesome and healthy), how does such a person not think about what goes into his head (the knowledge which he takes in)! He ensures that no harmful foods enter his stomach; however, his chest (mind) becomes the rendezvous point of deviated, base teachings!" [5]

In an upcoming lesson on media, we will discuss how **consumption** can include the knowledge, learning, and even media that we are exposed to on a daily basis. The idea of being aware of what we are consuming includes avoiding occupying our mind with unnecessary information that can prevent us from thinking clearly. Being selective about what we do during the day is also important as part of our "observation of food" as this verse indicates.

4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ʿAbasa (80), Verse 24.
5 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, P. 218, Ḥadīth #43.

EXERCISE

Islam also highly recommends exercise and staying active. Our Imāms ﷺ emphasized staying physically active and not being lazy. Many of the great scholars would try to take daily walks, and engage in other forms of exercise despite their busy schedules. Āyatullāh Khamenei regularly goes mountain climbing. Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said:

> "A believer who is physically strong is better than a believer who is physically weak."[6]

Of course, this speaks to all of our natural abilities, so we should try to be as strong as our bodies and abilities allow us to be so that we may serve Allah ﷻ in the best ways.

Regular exercise and keeping our bodies physically fit can help us develop self-discipline, and even bring us closer to Allah ﷻ when done with this intention. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged his companions to participate in sports such as archery, horse riding, swimming, and wrestling.

When we make time to exercise or remain physically active, we must ensure that it does not involve any forbidden activities, such as seeing people of the other gender in inappropriate clothing, or delaying our obligatory actions, etc. It should also be in a balanced way, for the sake of Allah ﷻ and not for the sake of showing off to others.

The faith of Islam strongly promotes a 'healthy lifestyle,' however it does not make a 'healthy body' the ultimate goal in life. We should remember that exercise, fitness, and eating the right foods are all ways or means of gaining proximity to Allah ﷻ, therefore we must treat them as such.

HYGIENE AND SELF-GROOMING

Another important aspect of a believer's life is their cleanliness—both in their personal life and in their social life.

Personal cleanliness includes paying attention to the rules of impurities *(najāsah)*—ensuring that we clean ourselves properly after we use the bathroom. It also includes paying attention to self-grooming such as: cutting our nails, brushing and flossing our teeth, keeping our hair clean and combed, and being neat and presentable overall—especially when we are in the presence of other people.

Our appearance and how we dress is also an important part of cleanliness in our social life. The Prophet ﷺ would take regular baths, apply perfume, and look in the mirror before meeting fellow believers to make sure that his hair and face appeared well-groomed. He would cut his nails and wash his face regularly, more so than people usually did at that time, to the surprise of the early Muslims. He would also wear musk (a type of cologne used at that time), and people would recognize him by his distinct nice smell.

Although we should not be occupied or judge anyone only by their appearance, it is important that we remember Allah ﷻ wants us to remain neat and clean to maintain our health and not offend anyone else. For example, if we participate in a group exercise class, we should remember to take a shower afterwards, and take appropriate measures to maintain good body odor before and after the exercises.

6 Muttaqī Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, Vol. 1, P. 115, Ḥadīth #540.

SLEEP AND WELL-BEING

Another important and often a neglected aspect of taking care of our bodies is the amount of sleep we get. We should try not to sleep too little or too much, as Islam encourages moderation in everything.

Scheduling our sleep every day, and having a regular bedtime can also help us offer the morning *(Fajr)* prayer on time, and it is generally encouraged to schedule our day accordingly. People who schedule their sleep, and sleep early also tend to have more energy during the day. Sometimes, schoolwork or socializing can get in the way of our sleep, but it is especially important for teenagers who are still growing to get a regular amount of sleep every night.

If you are having trouble sleeping, then one of the best things to do is to become conscious of your daily consumption. Our consumption—both physical and spiritual—can have a huge effect on how calm we are when we are trying to sleep, and it is especially important to try and regulate our consumption closer to the time we are planning to sleep.

Our bodies are designed to function best when we get sleep during the dark night-time hours. It is common medical knowledge that our physical and psychological health—including our ability to fight viruses—is improved when we get sufficient night-time sleep. While it may be tempting to stay up late at night to study, socialize, or play games, then subsequently sleep in the next day—especially if it is a weekend—this can have harmful physical and psychological consequences for us.

KEEPING THE RIGHT INTENTIONS

Overall, Islam has provided guidelines for how to keep our bodies fit, and how to fulfill our responsibilities toward our physical selves to better ensure that we are able to grow spiritually. Being healthy makes us feel good, but we should be careful not to make "feeling good" our sole purpose in life. If there is some popular advice or trend for physical health that goes against Islam, then we must avoid doing it. Regular exercise and a balanced diet are very important, but we should avoid being overly preoccupied with them. Sometimes, it might be more important to stay awake than follow our usual sleep schedule, like on the Nights of Destiny *(Laylat al-Qadr)*. As we are trying to live a healthy lifestyle, we should make our choices for the sake of Allah ﷻ and as a means of getting closer to Him.

Activity 1.2a: My Strategies for being Balanced

DIRECTIONS: Answer the questions below for implementing strategies for living a balanced lifestyle.

1. What kinds of healthy foods do you like to eat that you could try having more often?

2. What kind of unhealthy foods would you like to eat less of?

3. What kind of exercise would you like to try doing more regularly?

4. Is there anything you need to get to help you in improving your hygiene (such as a better nail cutter, a new automated brush, etc.)?

5. What are some strategies you want to implement for sleeping better?

1.3 Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Review the meaning of true happiness, and identify how our faith impacts our view of trials and difficulties.
- Understand the difference between self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Develop strategies to understand how low self-esteem can contribute to stress and anxiety.
- Identify holistic strategies that can help in coping with stress and anxiety.

TRUE HAPPINESS

STOP AND REFLECT: Is it possible to be happy all of the time? Why or why not?

In previous lessons, we talked about the perspective of Islam on true happiness. We know that our purpose in life is to get closer to Allah ﷻ by doing our responsibilities in every situation. When we get closer to Him and try to achieve His satisfaction, we are achieving true happiness. True happiness is found in being aligned with one's purpose, and obtaining this comes with working hard and facing the difficulties of living life. In the Qurʾān, the words *saʿādah* and *falāḥ* have been used for true happiness and translate to success, prosperity, and happiness.

The typical Western perspective of happiness promotes an unrealistic expectation that we should *always* feel happy, and there is something wrong if we are not happy. In reality, it is perfectly normal to have ups and downs in life. We might not realize that others are having problems in their lives because they may not tell us about them, but everyone faces difficulties in this world to some extent or another.

Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt:
Do the people suppose that they will be let off because they say: 'We believe' and they will not be tested? Certainly We tested those who were before them. So Allah shall surely ascertain those who are truthful, and He shall surely ascertain the liars.[1]

From this we see that when we claim to have faith in Allah ﷻ, He will present us with trials and challenges in life. Yet, when we are faced with these trials, it is sometimes difficult for us to remember that this is a way in which Allah ﷻ is bringing us closer to Him.

STOP AND REFLECT: Does social media give us a realistic picture of people's lives? Why or why not? What are some examples you have seen that are not realistic?

When we see people post on social media, they usually only post the best parts of their lives. We might not feel like this has an effect on how we view our own lives, but over time we might notice that we expect our own lives to look a certain way. We might want to dress in different ways, or do certain things because we see others posting these all of the time.

People who post on social media sometimes spend a lot of time editing their posts just to make them look nicer. Even a picture of coffee can be made to look better than it ever would in real life! It is important for us to be realistic and reflect on what we are seeing on social media, and analyze whether these things are helping us, or harming us by wanting us to have these unattainable desires.

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt (29), Verses 2-3.

SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

STOP AND REFLECT: What do you think the difference is between these two terms?

Self-confidence means to have trust or belief in being able to accomplish certain tasks and goals. For example, a math teacher might be confident in their ability to do and teach multiplication.

Another example would be of an experienced dental surgeon who is confident in their ability to perform teeth extractions. We would not call this surgeon arrogant because they have done their training and know what they are doing. But the same surgeon may not be confident in their ability to fly a plane, or fix a plumbing issue, because they do not have the necessary training in these particular fields.

Now, imagine a dental surgeon is too confident in their abilities, and attempts a very complicated case. They may likely make a mistake, then we would not call them a good dental surgeon. We would have more respect for them if they realized that they need a second opinion, or the help of someone else more qualified. Part of being realistic is knowing your own limits.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

What do you think are the characteristics of someone who is overly confident in themselves? How would you help them to become more balanced?

It is not necessary to feel self-confident about everything, because none of us are masters in everything. However, it is important to have a realistic understanding of one's strengths and abilities, and be confident with regards to what we can do.

SELF-CONFIDENCE: to have confidence in being able to accomplish certain tasks and goals

STOP AND REFLECT: What would be the problem if the dental surgeon knew how to do a tooth extraction, but was never confident in their ability to do so? What would you do if someone told you they were not confident, but were about to do a tooth extraction for you?

If the surgeon is too afraid to try performing a surgery, then they would never do a tooth extraction properly. We would not want them to do this for us; but is it also not good for them to let this get in the way of doing something they know how to do which can also benefit others.

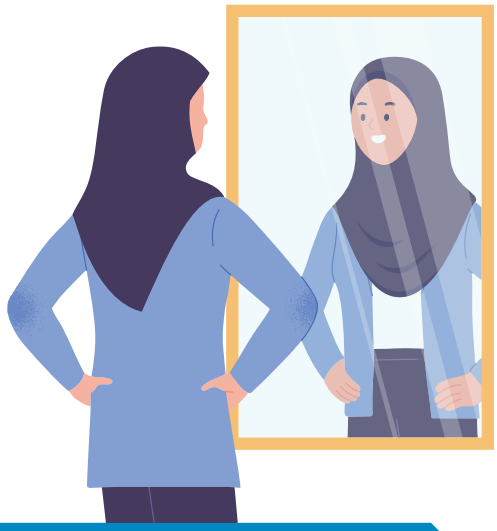
THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Imagine that you have a friend who lacks confidence in doing something that they are actually really good at. After talking to them, you realize that the reasons for the lack of confidence are:

1. They are self-conscious;
2. They failed in doing something in the past, and they are scared about failing again;
3. They do not think they are good enough, even though they actually are.

How can you help them regain their confidence?

Self-esteem is the overall sense of how much worth and value we have.



SELF-ESTEEM: the overall sense we have of how much worth and value we have

KHALĪFAH: representative

TAKABBUR: arrogance

IMĀN: faith

Islam teaches us that self-esteem is extremely important—as long as it stems from a correct and balanced perspective. Allah ﷻ has created us as His representative *(khalīfah)* on Earth, and we have the potential to be the most God-like of any of His creatures.

We can honor this blessing and responsibility by acknowledging it, and then strive to be the best of His creations. However, the root of some spiritual diseases is imagining or believing that we are independent of Allah ﷻ.

One of the most severe spiritual ills that human beings can face is that of pride or arrogance *(takabbur)*, where we see ourselves as independently possessing greatness and worth over others. *Takabbur* was one of the causes of the downfall of Iblīs (the main Satan or devil), and we are warned to eradicate it from our hearts or else we will follow his path of self annihilation.

People can have one extreme or another when it comes to self-confidence and self-esteem. Some individuals have excessive self-obsession, which is called narcissism. The culture of social media can promote narcissism by making it easy to be obsessed with one's own looks, opinions, or perceptions in the eyes of others.

An equally dangerous spiritual disease—which is often not given as much attention—is that of a lack of self-esteem. Islam teaches us that both extremes are condemnable, and encourages us to have a real perspective on things.

In our own lives, we must have a real perspective of our abilities and ourselves. What does this real perspective mean? We have to look at ourselves without thinking that we are better or worse than we actually are. There will always be internal or external factors that try to bring us down or build us up too high. For example, you might notice that people in school or on social media try to make what you are doing seem like it is not good enough.

This might happen especially if we are around non-Muslims, in school, or on social media. However, we have to remember to only take advice from people who truly care about us, want to help us, and are strong in their faith *(īmān)*.

Sometimes the people who are surrounding us might think it is funny to bring us down, but in these times it is important for us to remain confident, especially when it comes to our beliefs.

We should always remember that Allah ﷻ created us to be His representatives on earth and made us dignified and honored over the rest of His creations. Without needing to compare ourselves to others, we should feel honored because of this great esteem that He has blessed us with.

...And to Allah belongs all honor, and to His Messenger, and to the faithful, but the hypocrites do not know. [2]

2 Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn (63), Verse 8.

STRESS AND ANXIETY

Sometimes when we are faced with certain difficulties, we might fall into low self-esteem. For example, if we did not do well on an exam, or people treat us unkindly, we may start feeling bad about ourselves. Similarly, if we make a mistake we may start to dwell on this for a long time.

It is okay and natural to feel stress if we are facing a particular difficulty, but having prolonged periods of stress can lead to anxiety and/or depression. This can cause us to feel down about ourselves, or have negative thoughts where we might overthink something bad that has happened. This can also cause us to start feeling exhausted, because long periods of stress have an effect on our bodies.

If we find that we have stress or anxiety, or low self-esteem, then we should try to work on this over time. This cannot happen overnight, and it might still happen in difficult situations, but it is important overall for us to have a realistic perspective of ourselves. Sometimes, it helps to talk to someone whom we trust that has more knowledge than us if we feel that we have low self-esteem, like a parent, a trusted scholar, or a counselor. As we work on having a real perspective of life, we may still have negative thoughts about ourselves, but if we try to have this real perspective, then inshāʾAllah these will become less and less over time.

STRATEGIES FOR GAINING A REAL PERSPECTIVE

HAVE A SCHEDULE

It is important for us to have realistic expectations for ourselves, and plan out what we want to accomplish each day. Sometimes, when we think badly of ourselves, we are misdiagnosing the problem. For example, if you keep forgetting to exercise and now feel bad about it, then an unconstructive way to react is to believe that you are lazy. If you are not able to do a certain task, then first ask yourself if you are scheduling your day properly, and if you are not then that is the problem that needs to be worked on.

REFLECT EVERY DAY

Before we go to sleep, we should reflect on our actions that we did that day. Then, we should make an intention that the next day, we will do better if Allah ﷻ wills. Make sure to try and identify the real causes of your problems, and ask Allah ﷻ to help you in getting closer to Him.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

Our physical, mental, and spiritual health are all connected. If we are not sleeping or eating properly, then we will not have the energy to do our worship or basic chores of life, and may also become more irritable and/or pessimistic. It is important to keep a balance in our lives, and strengthen ourselves for the sake of Allah ﷻ.

RECITE AND REFLECT ON THE QUR'ĀN

The Qur'ān was sent down to us as a guide for how to lead our lives. Reciting the Qur'ān consistently every day and reflecting upon the Words of Allah ﷻ to humanity will help us gain a real perspective on life and ground us better.

REFLECT ON THE AHLUL BAYT ﷺ

When we reflect upon the lives of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, it will help keep our own lives in perspective. We can connect with any of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, but the mourning on Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ is a special blessing we have been given to elevate ourselves through reflection.

INCREASE GRATITUDE

When we feel low self-esteem, we often forget a lot of our good qualities that have been given to us by Allah ﷻ. On the other hand, when we are overconfident, it is because we have started to forget that Allah ﷻ is the One who has given us everything. When we thank Allah ﷻ, we remember to be grateful for what He has given us, and appreciate all of the good qualities that He continues to bless us with.

CONCLUSION

Allah ﷻ has given us many examples of people turning toward Him after they made mistakes—both in the Qurʾān, and through various stories of the companions of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. We know the story of Ḥurr: how he changed his life around, left the army of the enemies, and became one of the close companions of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ who sacrificed his life on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ alongside the Imām.

As we try to work on having a real perspective on ourselves, remember that sincere repentance, turning toward Allah ﷻ, and asking for forgiveness sincerely can bring us back on the path toward Him, *inshāʾAllāh*.

If we work on ourselves everyday using the strategies listed above, then with the help of Allah ﷻ, we can slowly improve ourselves over time. As we reflect on ourselves, we may find that we have too much confidence in some aspects of our lives, and too little in other areas. Sometimes, we may act as if we are better than others, but inside of ourselves we actually know how weak we are, and lack self-esteem because we do not see ourselves connected to the Source of all Perfection, Allah ﷻ.

We may need external help from qualified experts who have training in these issues that we face, but we should not let this impact our self-confidence or self-esteem. It is important when working on ourselves to remember that we are meant to improve ourselves throughout our entire lives, and do our best to grow closer to Allah ﷻ.

Activity 1.3a: Scenarios

DIRECTIONS: Individually or with a partner, write what advice you would give to the person in each example below about how to gain a real perspective in each situation.

1. Adam has been trying to exercise regularly, but every day this week he was not able to do so. Adam wants to give up because he thinks of himself as lazy, and starts feeling bad about himself.

2. Zahra recently started attending a new school, and does not know anyone around her. She tries to speak to other students, but has not had much luck since the other students already know each other quite well. She begins to feel bad about herself because although she is being kind to her peers, she does not feel like she fits in at all.

3. Jawad is supposed to stay for after-school tutoring in math for an upcoming test because his last marks were lower than what he was hoping for, but instead he decides to go to his friend's house without studying much. He does not do well at all on the test.

Activity 1.3b:
My Strategies for Maintaining a Real Perspective

DIRECTIONS: Fill out the reflection questions below. You will not be required to share your answers with anyone.

1. What are some strategies mentioned in this lesson that you can use in your own life for gaining and maintaining a real perspective of yourself?

2. What situations cause you to have low self-esteem? What do you sometimes feel low self-esteem about?

   a. Which of these situations might be caused by scheduling problems, or other things that can be fixed?

   b. What should you be grateful for in the moments when you have low self-esteem in these situations?

   c. Which of these situations can you improve by asking for forgiveness, and trying to fix your mistakes?

3. What are some situations where you feel overconfident, or not confident enough?

   a. What should you be grateful for in the moments when you have low self-confidence?

   b. Which of these situations can you improve by asking for forgiveness, and trying to fix your mistakes?

CHAPTER 2

Spiritual Diseases

2.1 Anger and Forbearance

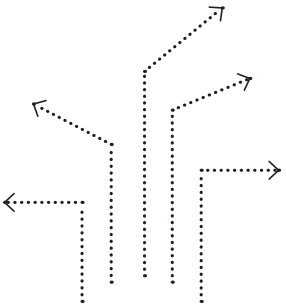
2.2 Greed vs. Contentment

2.1 Anger and Forbearance

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Define what is *ghaḍab*?
- Identify how good and bad anger stem from *ghaḍab*.
- Recognize the consequences of deficient anger including cowardice, displaced fear, and/or lack of dignity.
- Recognize how excessive anger can lead to hastiness and recklessness.
- Identify what steps one can take to extinguish anger.
- Develop personal strategies for managing anger.



FIṬRAH: our inner nature and programming

STOP AND REFLECT: Is anger always bad? Why or why not?

CHANNELING OUR ANGER

Anger is often framed as an evil trait that we should try to completely rid ourselves of. In reality, anger stems from a power within our soul which is known as ***ghaḍab***. *Ghaḍab* is responsible for many good things that human beings do, such as showing courage in times of fear, defending the innocent in times of attack, and even being competitive in a healthy manner. *Ghaḍab* stems from our inner nature and programming ***(fiṭrah)***. As we have learned, our *fiṭrah* is pure, so everything it contains must have a purpose, even the faculty of anger. What matters is how we direct our anger, and whether what we are angry about is for the sake of Allah ﷻ, or for our own lower personal desires.

Everything, including emotions, has a distinct purpose. If we use a tool for its proper purpose, then it will be beneficial; but if we use it out of place or for the wrong purpose, then it will be extremely detrimental. For instance, take the example of a knife. A knife is a useful tool that enables an individual to cut fruits, vegetables, and other necessary things. However, if a person is not careful with the knife, then one can accidentally injure oneself or others. In this example, a knife is beneficial as long as it is used under careful and controlled usage.

Your anger is beneficial if you use it to stop injustice, or help those who are being wronged. If you are able to stop yourself from acting recklessly when angry, then your anger (and your mastery over it) will help develop you into a better human being. Therefore, one of the keys to self-development is to channel your anger properly, and use it or hold it back depending on the circumstances.

DEFICIENT ANGER

STOP AND REFLECT: Imagine if Allah ﷻ had not given us the ability to feel any anger. How would we react when we saw someone being bullied right in front of us?

If we did not have the faculty of anger, then we would not feel repulsed when we see something wrong or someone hurting others. This can lead to cowardice when there are instances that require action. When we see oppression happening in the world, we should feel anger toward the transgressors even if we are not able to do anything about it physically. We should at least pray that people are relieved of their hardships, and for the return of our Imām عجل الله فرجه الشريف who will establish peace and justice throughout the entire world.

Having deficient anger can cause us to have many different problems, such as laziness, cowardice, displaced fear, and love of comfort. The common factor in all of these is not feeling repulsion toward what we should be repulsed by. If we were never strongly opposed to or repelled by sins or things that Allah ﷻ tells us to stay away from, then we will not be moved in any way. We would feel comfortable about whatever is happening around us, and ignore whatever is bad.

Deficient anger can also lead to displaced fear. For example, we might be afraid of things that should not really cause us fright as such—like fearing that something bad will happen without a real reason, or being scared of dead bodies, or being frightened of the dark. We may have an excessive fear of death to the point where we do not want to even think about it, which in turn prevents us from preparing for it properly. We might always be anxious and worried about things we should be confident about.

Having a deficiency in anger can also lead us to lack a sense of dignity. This is especially a problem because as believers, we should have a sense of dignity for ourselves. For example, if we are in a group of people who choose to have different values and practices, then we should have a sense of dignity and not feel like we need to act or dress the way they do if it is not in line with Islam.

In order to avoid deficiency in anger, one thing we can do is regularly participate in the Friday prayers *(Ṣalāt al-Jumuʿah)* where the leader of the prayers *(Imām al-Jumuʿah)* reminds us about current affairs, the tragedies that befell the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, the mission of the Imām of our time ﷺ to bring worldwide justice, and we can collectively remember the oppressed in our supplications (we should try to pray for them on our own every day). These things, along with being aware of what is happening in the world and reflecting on our own actions, should help us become more balanced in life.

EXCESSIVE ANGER

STOP AND REFLECT: How does a person act when they are very angry? What do they often do? What are some of the dangers of being too angry?

Sometimes our anger can get out of control and we may give into it in harmful ways. This happens when our anger comes from pure emotion and no reason, and we act upon it by taking destructive decisions. This not only ruins our relationships with others, but it also prevents us from reaching our true purpose in life which is nearness to Allah ﷻ.

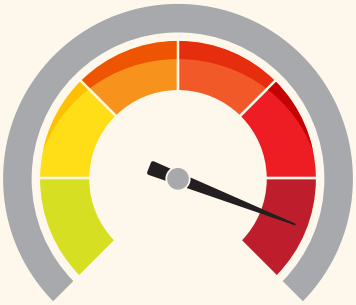
One of the examples where we can see this happening is in sports. Sometimes when a person gets angry in a game, it seems like they lose all control. Another time when this often happens is when people do not like what they are being told.

Excessive anger can lead us to become hasty and behave recklessly, despite warnings of reason and religion. When someone is excessively angry, they might say harsh words, or raise their voice. Reflect on how you act when you are angry. Have you ever felt regret later on for how you acted, or the words you said? There are even common phrases for reckless anger, like ‘road rage’ which is reckless driving because someone becomes angry.

GHAḌAB: the power to react with strength when needed. If not controlled, it can lead to excessive anger

GHAḌAB-O-METER

laziness
cowardice
displaced fear
love of comfort



recklessness
self-conceit
arrogance
hastiness

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some of the consequences of road rage? Why is it that people do not consider the consequences when they have road rage?

Excessive anger is often a sign of arrogance and self-conceit, and when it goes unchecked it can result in these qualities becoming entrenched in an even deeper manner.

BOTTLING OUR ANGER

STOP AND REFLECT: What happens when we shake a carbonated drink and then open the cap? What if you did this with water?

Bottling our anger can be a lot like this analogy.

When someone gets angry and explodes, it is like how when there is a carbonated beverage bottle that is shaken up and then its top is taken off. The liquid does not just come out—it actually shoots out and usually causes damage and a big mess, just like someone who releases their anger without control usually causes damage far and wide.

Our 'cap' for anger is having God-consciousness *(taqwā)*. *Taqwā* determines if and when anger needs to be released, and when it is released that it is done in a careful way. If we are constantly thinking about our purpose in life—which is getting closer to Allah ﷻ—while performing all of our actions, then we will be able to channel and control our anger much better.

TAQWĀ:
God-consciousness

SOME STRATEGIES FOR CONTROLLING ANGER

It is good to try to extinguish your negative anger right away when it first occurs. Below are some advices on how to do this:

1. Change your Position

We have several *ḥadīth* that tell us to change our position if we are angry; for example, if we are standing, then we should sit down; if we are sitting, then we should take a walk.[1] We can also do breathing exercises to calm ourselves down and slow our heart rate.

2. Perform Wuḍūʾ or Ghusl

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said: *"...Therefore, if one of you finds some of this (anger) in oneself, then if you are standing, sit down; and if you are sitting, then lay down. If you are still angry, then perform wuḍūʾ with cold water, or take a ghusl, for fire can only be extinguished with water."*[2] If you already have *wuḍūʾ*, then you can perform it again with the intention of *"nūrun ʿālā nūr"*—light upon light.

1 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 73, P. 264.
2 Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍāʾ*, Vol. 5, P. 307.

To prevent becoming angry repeatedly, we should reflect on our actions every night before we go to sleep, and try to figure out the reasons why we are feeling angry, or what is triggering our temper to get out of control. Here are some things we can reflect on:

1. Recognize if there is Something Else Causing the Anger	Sometimes we become angry because we are hungry or tired, thus this is the cause of our irritability. Eating in an unhealthy manner (like consuming a lot of junk food, or not eating wholesome meals) can also be a cause of unbalanced emotions. Try to recognize when this happens and prevent the situation from happening again. Ask yourself when you are angry: Do I really have to be this angry about what happened, or am I hungry and in need of more nutritious food, or tired, or upset about something else?
2. Reflect on the Situation	When things happen to us or we make a mistake, we should reflect on what happened instead of becoming angry about it. A simple example is being angry over losing a game or getting a bad grade, or becoming upset when someone breaks your belongings.
3. Communicate	When someone else makes us angry, we should make sure to be clear about what we think happened and talk to them calmly. Never assume that the other person has the same understanding of a situation that you do. Realize that conflict is inevitable. The nature of this world is that there are times where people will disagree with one another. What is important is for you to align what you do with what Allah ﷻ wants from you, then leave the rest to Him.
4. Pray for Others	Sometimes, we do not have the opportunity or ability to talk to someone about how we were upset by something they did; or perhaps even after talking to them, they still do not understand our intentions. We should pray for these people, and ask Allah ﷻ to soften our hearts toward each other.
5. Fulfilling our Responsibilities	When we perform our duties and obligations (like doing what is *wājib*), and staying away from what is forbidden *(ḥarām)*, and being kind to others, etc., then we will strengthen our own will-power and control. This way, when we are tested with things that may make us angry, we will not act recklessly or hurt others.
6. Do the Right Thing	When you are in a difficult situation, brace yourself, and muster the courage to do something that you know you should perform, but normally are afraid to do. For example, if you are scared of crossing the street, then the only way of overcoming this fear is to actually do it.
7. Read the Noble Qurʾān	Reading and reflecting on the Qurʾān, and putting what we know into practice will help us develop the love of Allah ﷻ, and the fear of depriving ourselves of His special mercy due to our negative actions, and this can help us think before we act and control our anger better.
8. Do Dhikr	Being in the constant remembrance of Allah ﷻ will help us remember Him when we are overwhelmed with emotions, and stop us from doing something that we may regret later on.
9. Observe Patience	Sometimes, even when we communicate with other people and tell them how we feel, they still may not act the way we would like them to. We need to be patient and forbearant with them, especially if they are your parents, relatives, or close Muslims. We should remember that Allah ﷻ has created people with free-will, and everyone has their own challenges. One of the best ways of growing stronger is to learn how to bear and cope with other people's annoying behaviors.

Activity 2.1a: My Personal Strategies for Anger

1. We talked about good *ghaḍab*—which can include making prayers for the oppressed, or helping those in need when we able to. What are some ways you want to work on incorporating good *ghaḍab* in your life?

2. What do you usually become angry about that you want to work on to improve?

3. What strategies do you plan to use in each of the situations listed above, to keep you from becoming angry?

4. For the next week, write down when you became angry, and how you handled your anger. Then, try to find the root reasons of why you were angry, and what was the underlying cause of your anger. This is not to be shared with others, but only for yourself to try to become better.

	Why you became angry	How you handled your anger	Underlying causes of anger
SUN			
MON			
TUE			
WED			
THU			
FRI			
SAT			

5. **End of the Week Reflection:** How did the above mentioned strategies help you control your anger? How can you improve on them in the future?

2.2 Greed vs. Contentment

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Define the term *ḥirṣ*.
- Identify the difference between good ḥirṣ and bad *ḥirṣ*.
- Recognize the consequences of bad *ḥirṣ*.
- Explain how to rid ourselves of bad *ḥirṣ*.
- Develop personal strategies for managing greed.

GHAFLAH: heedlessness

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some things people are greedy about? What are some of the problems that can come about with being greedy? Is it possible to have too much of a good thing?

One day, Hārūn Rashīd, one of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs, commanded his men to look for an old man who had met the Prophet ﷺ and could narrate a tradition *(ḥadīth)* from him. His men looked far and wide, and finally found an old man who claimed that he had seen the Prophet ﷺ and could narrate from him. In the court of Hārūn, the old man shared the following *ḥadīth* from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "The children of Ādam will grow old, but they will always possess two characteristics as if they are still young: greed, and far-fetched wishes." [1]

When the man finished sharing this *ḥadīth*, Hārūn gave him a gift, after which the old man asked him: "Is this gift only for this year, or will you give me a gift every year?"

Hārūn laughed and responded: "Indeed, the Prophet ﷺ spoke the truth!"

The above story demonstrates a trait that is common in human beings, which is greed. The Arabic term for greed is *ḥirṣ*. *Ḥirṣ* is an intense desire for something which makes us work hard, and put in extra effort to attain it. We are all born with an innate desire to want more and more. As humans, we have been created with a desire for the infinite and unlimited. Imām ʿAlī ؑ said:

> "*Ḥirṣ* is wanting something very little in exchange of losing something so great." [2]

We want an unlimited amount of wealth, unlimited success, unlimited knowledge, etc. Yet, only Allah ﷻ is truly unlimited. When we try to find infinite things other than Allah ﷻ, we will never be satisfied with things in this world. Good *ḥirṣ*, or eagerness, is when we want to become better for the sake of Allah ﷻ, and want more of those things which will lead us to Him and His proximity.

1 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Al-Khiṣāl*, Vol. 1, P. 73.
2 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 73, P. 167.

GOOD ḤIRṢ

Good *ḥirṣ* refers to wanting something that is beneficial for our ultimate purpose. It is having an eagerness or desire for things, but not for the sake of this world, rather for the next world. For example, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ was eager for knowledge, worship, self-building, and good deeds. This kind of *ḥirṣ* allows for self-improvement. A good example of this is how a believer must be greedy about one's own time in this life, and not spend it on baseless things (*lahw* and *laʿb*), or useless matters which will not benefit a person in this world or the next.

Another example of good *ḥirṣ* can be seen in the story of Abū Rayḥān Birūnī. While he was on his deathbed, he was visited by a jurist. Abū Rayḥān Birūnī asked the jurist a question so as to be able to increase his knowledge, and the jurist was shocked. He asked him: "Why are you asking me this question at such a critical point in life when you are so close to death?" To this Abū Rayḥān replied: "It is better to die with knowledge of the answer, rather than dying without knowing it."[3] His thirst for knowledge was so strong that even on his deathbed, he was eager for knowledge.

BAD ḤIRṢ

The bad kind of *ḥirṣ* presents itself in a few different forms, such as being greedy for things that are forbidden *(ḥarām)*, unattainable, or not beneficial for us in relation to our purpose in this life. For example, someone may want more wealth, and spend all of their time trying to attain more and more wealth, but then spend that money on futile things. A person may become greedy for becoming the best in their career, but in the process sacrifices time and is not able to do anything for the sake of Allah ﷻ or even fulfill one's own compulsory obligations.

ḤIRṢ: the Arabic term for greed; an intense desire for something

Different things that we seek in our lives can all be good with the correct balance and moderation, and if they are for the sake of Allah ﷻ. Seeking a good livelihood can be done for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, but we should not become greedy and spend all of our time or effort on this. It can also be harmful for us if we are doing this all of the time, and are doing it with the wrong intention or mindset. Even gaining knowledge can be a bad type of greed if the knowledge is not for the sake of Allah ﷻ, instead if it is for the sake of our own ego, or for fame and glory. It can also be bad if we try to do something good, but neglect our other responsibilities. For example, if we are gaining knowledge all day, but do not help our parents when they need or ask for our help.

3 *Collection Works of Shahīd Muṭṭahharī,* Vol. 21, P. 270.

CONSEQUENCES OF BAD ḤIRṢ

ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, who was the commander of the army of Yazīd, is an example of how bad greed turns you away from Allah ﷻ. He grew up with Imām Ḥusayn ؑ and the two were even playmates during their childhood. However, his excessive greed for this world led him to turn against the Ahlul Bayt ؑ in Karbalāʾ. Not only was he greedy for wealth and power, but he also wanted to take away what others had in their possession, and this is known as *ṭamaʿ*. He was greedy for the governance of the city of Rey, which Yazīd had promised to give him. A couple of days before the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, Imām Ḥusayn ؑ met with ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, and invited him to join the side of truth. Imām Ḥusayn ؑ guaranteed him all of the treasures in the afterlife and Heaven if he came to his side, but ʿUmar ibn Saʿd was too greedy for this temporary world. His greed became his new purpose, blinding him from the real purpose of life which is to attain nearness to Allah ﷻ. In the end, he had Imām Ḥusayn ؑ and his family and companions killed, but did not even attain the wealth or power that he so desperately desired that others' had.

STOP AND REFLECT: In today's world, what are some of the things that people want too much of? Can you think of some examples of these, and to what extent people will go through to attain them?

Being greedy for things in this world can have many negative consequences. The first consequence is that it prevents us from optimizing our potential in this world and the hereafter. When we become greedy for something that is limited, we will spend all of our time and efforts trying to attain more and more. We get trapped by our greed and are not able to focus on what is really important.

A greedy person, according to Imām al-Bāqir ؑ, is like a silk-worm that keeps on wrapping itself in a cocoon, but then it cannot escape from that until it finally dies of grief![4]

The second consequence of greed is that the love and desire you chase can end up replacing your ultimate goal of getting closer to Allah ﷻ. For example, if a person loves food so much it can reach the point where their goal in life is not to fulfill their ultimate purpose, but to fulfill their endless desire for food. They become someone who lives to eat, rather than only eating to live; and they may end up not even worrying if the food they eat is permissible or not. This will lead to heedlessness *(ghaflah)* and make them inattentive of the fact that this world is only temporary, and there are higher and better things that we need to strive for in life.

Another example is someone who wants to gain more wealth. If this becomes a person's primary goal, then they may even get an impermissible *(ḥarām)* job as long as it means they can earn more money.

Sometimes, bad *ḥirṣ* can even be about something that is not material, such as wanting more likes on a social media post or video in order to show off, or get more fame and glory. We may even waste time on something if we are being greedy about it; for example, if we are trying to be the best at a certain sport, we might neglect the other parts of our lives.

The third consequence of greed is that it leads to a lack of contentment and happiness. If we want to live a content life, then we have to look beyond this material world. Being greedy prevents us from being content, and instead we end up spending all of our time looking to satisfy that greed within us.

The fourth consequence of greed is that it can make a person stingy. We see that there are some people who have accumulated a lot of wealth, yet they are very stingy with sharing that wealth. A lot of celebrities and CEOs are like this, even if they are the wealthiest of people.

4 Māzandarānī, Muḥammad Sāliḥ, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, Vol. 5, P. 232.

HOW TO PREVENT BAD ḤIRṢ

As noted above, *ḥirṣ* leads us toward endlessly wanting more of anything and everything; but there are certain things that we can do to help us not become greedy as such, some of which are the following:

1. Remembering Death	When we realize that we will only live for a finite amount of time in this world, then this will help us not give in to forbidden desires and wake us up. It will make this world seem very insignificant in our eyes, soften our hearts, make us more content, and strengthen our belief in Allah's promises. Some of the ways in which we can remember that we will have to leave this world and die one day is by visiting the graveyard, reciting Qur'ān for those who have passed away (the *marḥūmīn*), and participating in funerals.
2. Fulfilling our Responsibilities *(Taklīf)*	When we perform our daily duties and obligations, it will help us in every action that we do, and keep us away from different vices. When we do what is compulsory *(wājib)*, stay away from what is forbidden *(ḥarām)*, and be kind to others, then we are constantly thinking about Allah ﷻ, getting closer to Him, and practicing God-consciousness *(taqwā)*.
3. Being Grateful	When we are grateful to Allah ﷻ for whatever we have, it will help us not be greedy for things that we do not have.
4. Reflecting	Whenever we want to perform a particular action, we should think about why we want to do that deed. Before we purchase an item or try to achieve something, we should first reflect on why we are doing that, and whether it is going to take us closer to or further away from Allah ﷻ. For example, trying to get a job that will earn us good money, or getting something expensive is not necessarily bad, but we have to look at what our intention is, and whether that thing is good in the first place or not. For example, if we are getting a good, permissible *(ḥalāl)* job, but then we will not have time for our other responsibilities like spending quality time with our family, helping out at home, or volunteering at our local center, then maybe we should reconsider taking that job. If we find ourselves wanting to regularly overeat or overspend, then we should question our intentions, and remind ourselves that this type of greediness will never lead us to what we really need and want in this short-lived life.

CONCLUSION

We have learned that greed—*ḥirṣ*—is an inherent and intense desire or yearning that is present in all human beings. However, the kind of *ḥirṣ* we train ourselves to possess determines which category of humans we belong to—those who are lower than the animals or higher than the angels.

Bad *ḥirṣ* will place us among the group of people who are unhappy, unsatisfied, ungrateful, and on a path that will lead us away from Allah ﷻ and our true purpose in this world. This category of people will face degradation, and will never find peace, happiness, or spiritual gain.

The other group are those people who have good *ḥirṣ* and are eager for those things that will lead them closer to Allah ﷻ and attain their purpose in life. This category of individuals will rise above and beyond the previous group, and will find contentment and achieve the best in both this world and the Hereafter.

Activity 2.2a: My Strategies for Greed

1. Reflect on some things in life that you really want. It could be wealth, or something you want to buy but do not really need, or it could be social media likes, or something you want that you are spending too much time on. Write it down.

Using the strategies listed above in "How to prevent bad *ḥirṣ*"—write how you would like to change these things.

2. What are some things you would like to have good *ḥirs* about? For example, gaining knowledge of the Qurʾān, knowledge about the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, perfecting your morals and manners *(akhlāq)*, etc. Be as specific as possible.

Write some goals for the next week about how you want to get rid of bad *ḥirṣ* and incorporate good *ḥirṣ* into your routine of life.

CHAPTER 3

Family and Friendships

3.1 Being Good to Parents

3.2 True Friendship

3.1 Being Good to Parents

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify ways to build trust with our parents.
- Recognize Qur'ānic guidelines for how to treat our parents.
- Analyze what to do in difficult situations involving our parents.

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some reasons why it is important to be good to our parents?

Having a good relationship with our parents is a key to success both in this world and the next. We are told in narrations that if you maintain love and respect for your parents, then you will see positive effects not only in the next world, but also in all areas of your life in this world as well.

The Noble Prophet ﷺ said:
A person who likes one's life to be lengthened and one's provision to be increased, should do good toward one's parents, and maintain Ṣilat ar-Raḥim (good relations with one's womb relatives).[1]

Society is made up of various communities, and communities are made up of families. The core of every family is the parental unit. Therefore, in order for us to have healthy communities and societies we must start with the people at home—our family. After all, they are the foundation of society as a whole.

Baba, it's time to eat!
Baba-joon is fast asleep!
How can I wake him?!
option 1
Baba-joon, it's time to eat! Please wake up!
option 2
BABA-JOON!!
No, no. There has to be a better way.
I think I know...
Māshā'Allāh, you are so thoughtful. I want to make du'ā for you so that you continue to make the right choices.

1 Muttaqī Hindī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl,* Vol. 16, P. 475.

We have an example from the life of one of our great scholars, Āyatullāh Marʿashī Najafī, who compiled manuscripts for one of the biggest Islamic libraries located in the city of Qum. He had great respect for his parents even as a young child. When he was a young man of around 11 or 12 years old, and lived with his parents in Najaf, his mother said to Āyatullāh Najafī: "I would like you to go to the study room, and let your father know that lunch is ready."

When Āyatullāh Najafī went upstairs, he saw that his father had fallen asleep on top of his books. He wanted to fulfill what his mother told him, but at the same time he did not want to disturb his father's sleep. Āyatullāh Najafī, as a child, stood trying to think what would be the best thing to do. He decided to kiss his father's feet until he woke up. When Āyatullāh Najafī's father woke up and saw his son being so sweet, he became very happy and started to pray for his son. Āyatullāh Najafī said that every one of the supplications *(duʿās)* that his father made for him came true.

BUILDING TRUST WITH OUR PARENTS

As we get older, we start gaining experiences of our own, and it may seem that our parents have different perspectives. We should try to understand our parents' perspective by consciously putting ourselves in their shoes. Living among people who are not Muslims, or those who do not have the same beliefs as us may make our parents more cautious about who we spend our time with, or which places we are allowed to go to. Parents may not always tell us the things that we want to hear, but that is because they want the best for us, and it is a way of showing how much they care about us.

For example, maybe your parents will not allow you to go on a trip with others in your school, or they do not allow you to stay out as late as some of your friends. They probably have a lot of restrictions around how and when you can use devices (and they should have these in place). Although they may trust you to not do anything wrong, there are spiritual and practical dangers that come with allowing you to be around people or in places that they do not know or trust. This may cause you to be angry with your parents, or even tempt you to do something bad toward them; however you must realize that they are doing these things for your own good. Even if one is influenced only a little bit at first, a person can easily be deceived by their desires, which is why prevention is the key solution and protection for everyone. If you know that your parents do not want you to go somewhere or do something that you want to do, it is better to rely on their experience and their love for you. Allah ﷻ will see this obedience that you have toward your parents and the patience that you endure, and will reward you in this world and the Hereafter. This will also protect you from many harms that you may not foresee at your young age.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Another important area where we need to maintain respect toward our parents is when communicating with them. There are two types of communications: verbal and nonverbal. We talked about how we should trust our parents' wisdom, but if we disagree with them in regards to some issue then we should still always communicate with them respectfully. We must do this even in our non-verbal communication by avoiding things such as rolling our eyes, breathing sharply out of anger, or looking at them angrily.

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some examples of verbal and nonverbal communication that are respectful and good?

Effective communication is the foundation of a positive relationship with our parents that can open up the doors to our success. Part of effective communication is knowing the right time to say or discuss something. For example, if our parents are very tired, or we have discussed a topic many times, maybe they need time to think about what we said.

Alḥamdulillah, the Qurʾān has given us several guidelines on how we should communicate with our parents—both verbally and nonverbally. For example, Allah ﷻ says:

1 Be good to your parents

...وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا... "...And be good to your parents..."[2]

The first guideline that Allah ﷻ gives us is to be good to our parents. We should help our parents—not only when they ask—but even before they ask. If we shift our perspective, then we will notice these opportunities as a way to earn great rewards from Allah ﷻ. Some examples are to help them bring in grocery bags from the car without them asking, or emptying the dishwasher, or taking out the garbage, etc. Other ways we can be good to our parents is by showing them that we appreciate their advice, noticing the good they do for us, thanking them for everything they do to help us, and praying for them.

These types of actions please Allah ﷻ very much, as He mentions in the Qurʾān that He loves the those who do good (the *muḥsinīn*). The *muḥsinīn* anticipate the needs and wants of others, and fulfill these requirements before even being asked. Additionally, they do not look for rewards or even acknowledgment—they simply want to help others and understand that their rewards are with Allah ﷻ.

2 Speak to them with honor and kindness

...وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ۝ "...And speak to them with honorable words."[3]

Another guideline for communicating with our parents is to use *'qawlan karīmā'* which means that we should 'speak to them with honor and kindness.' Sometimes, we may not be saying anything wrong, but our tone implies that we are angry or impatient. Instead, we should always try to maintain a pleasant tone, and only use the best words when we are speaking to our parents.

We can also honor our parents through our actions. One way we can do this is by standing up and giving them our seat when they enter the room. We should acknowledge and greet them when they enter the house or when we wake up in the morning, and show happiness and respect to them in every way. Another way of expressing our regard for them is to include them in our conversations with others.

3 Do not even say "uff"

...فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَا أُفٍّ... "...Do not even say to them—'uff (ugh)!'..."[4]

A third guideline that Allah ﷻ gives us in the Qurʾān is to refrain from talking back or arguing with our parents. In fact, we should not even say something as minute as "uff"—which is the smallest and most insignificant word in Arabic—an expression of being displeased. In English, the equivalent word would be something like "ugh," or an exasperated sigh. When we talk to our parents, we must address them with respect and genuine interest. Even if we disagree with something they say, we still need to maintain respect and state our case politefully and kindly. While this may not always be easy, it is something we can improve on with practice and patience.

2 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Isrāʾ (17), Verse 23.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Isrāʾ (17), Verse 23.
4 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Isrāʾ (17), Verse 23.

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

STOP AND REFLECT: When might it be the most difficult to listen to our parents? Why is it important that we still listen to them and be respectful toward them?

Allah ﷻ has given us several examples in the Qur'ān of difficult family situations. The uncle of Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ, who was also his caretaker, refused to follow Islam. The brothers of Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ threw him down a well. The son and wife of Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ did not believe in him and were drowned in the flood. The uncle of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ used to mock and abuse him, and a *sūrah* came down condemning him. Still, the Prophets ﷺ were so forgiving and spoke with kind words—even to those who hurt them. As we get older, we may notice that our parents are not always perfect, or we may sometimes have disagreements with them. We might overhear them arguing with one another, or see that they are upset with each other. It is natural to feel saddened when we see this as their children—after all we love both of our parents and want to see them get along all of the time! But disagreements are natural in life, and our parents can still love each other but have disputes about certain things.

We should never blame ourselves if our parents do not agree or argue with each other about something, as long as we do our best to treat them with respect and kindness. If you feel bad when you see your parents arguing, then let them know about your feelings, respectfully. You can request them to have their disagreements in private. If there is something happening that disturbs you, and you are not able to talk about it with your parents, or it is not getting resolved, then you should reach out to a trusted individual for help.

Sometimes, parents do not get along at all to a point where they decide to separate from one another, temporarily or even permanently. This process can be very difficult for parents and children to bear. You might feel like you need to try and solve the problem, or take sides, but instead you should just pray for them and for the best outcome. Remember that life is filled with trials and tests, and one must be patient in all circumstances of life—and whether one's parents are together, separated, or divorced, we need to depend on Allah ﷻ and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ for strength and support. If you feel confused or are down in life, then get advice from your parents, other loved ones, trusted individuals, a religious scholar, or a counselor. We should be thankful for whatever we have gotten from our parents, and continue to do our responsibility toward them no matter what happens in life.

There is one time that we need to always be firm with people—even our parents—and that is when someone wants us to do something which Allah ﷻ does not like. We should never listen to anyone—including our parents—if they ask us to do something against what Allah ﷻ wants from us.

CONCLUSION

Parents are a great blessing from Allah ﷻ. They provide us with love and support throughout our entire lives. They care for us, and help guide us in every way they can. Islam identifies our duties toward them very clearly, and calls for proper and kind behavior, pointing out that much of our successes—both in this world and the next—depend on these positive interactions with them. Our affectionate, respectful, and self-controlled behavior toward them pleases Allah ﷻ, and in turn He will shower us with many blessings in this life and the Hereafter.

Activity 3.1a: Being Good to my Parents

1. What are some examples of situations where you might not act the best with your parents? (You will not be sharing this with anyone.)

2. What are certain things you do to help your parents out?

3. What are some things that you would like to try to do more of to be good to your parents?

4. For the next week, write down when you could have been better with your parents than you actually were. Also keep track of when you did something good toward your parents.

	Could have been better with Parents	Did something good to parents
SUN		
MON		
TUE		
WED		
THU		
FRI		
SAT		

5. **End of the Week Reflection:** How did you do this week? What would you like to improve more in the future?

3.2 True Friendship

OBJECTIVES

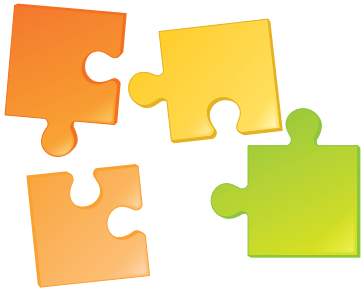
WE WILL:

- Identify the difference between a friend and an acquaintance.
- Recognize good friends as a blessing from Allah ﷻ.
- Outline some components of a true friendship.
- Explain how to have moderation in friendships.
- Explain why we should surround ourselves with people who remind us of Allah ﷻ.
- Develop strategies for complex social situations.

In our life, we may be 'acquainted' with a lot of people. We know our family members, teachers, classmates, colleagues—and the list goes on.

STOP AND REFLECT: What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?

Typically, the answer given is that those who are closest to us, and share similar interests and beliefs are our friends. We usually spend a lot of time with friends and care about them. Others whom we know and see regularly, but have not built a relationship with them are classified as our acquaintances.



COMPONENTS OF A TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Besides Allah ﷻ and the 14 Immaculate Ones *(Maʿṣūmīn)* عليهم السلام, there may be some other people who will genuinely care for you, and wish to see you improve. You may become their friend and share valuable experiences with them. While this is great, it is also important to remember that friendship is not about good times only—it comes with responsibilities and maturity. As you make friends in life, it is important to ponder about the following key concepts of a true friendship:

1. Mutual respect for each other
2. Genuine care for one another
3. Trustworthiness between friends
4. Forgiveness among yourselves

Activity 3.2a: Friendship Analysis

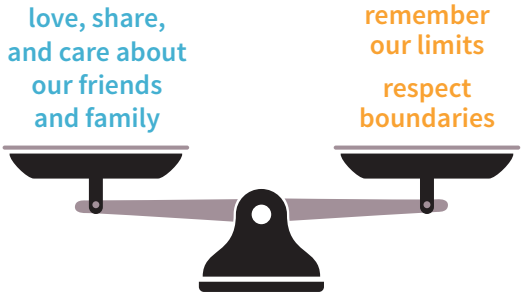
DIRECTIONS: Complete the table below with an example of true friendship from your daily life.

COMPONENT OF A TRUE FRIENDSHIP (*Ḥadīth*)	**EXAMPLE YOU MAY HAVE SEEN OR EXPERIENCED, OR CAN IMAGINE**
Mutual respect for each other Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ said: "Just as your friend respects you, you need to respect them." [1]	
Genuine care for one another Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said: "Friends make you aware of your shortcomings and wrongdoings. They warn you that you may be doing something harmful." [2]	
Trustworthiness between friends Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said: "Friends keep your secrets, but if your secret is something that could hurt you, they will tell someone who is responsible and can help you." [3]	
Forgiveness among yourselves Imām al-ʿAskarī ﷺ said: "The best of your friends are those who forget your shortcomings, but never forget your kindness." [4]	

1 Shaykh Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil ash-Shīʿah,* Vol. 15, P. 273.
2 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 4, P. 452.
3 Āmidī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam,* Ḥadīth #1904.
4 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 75, P. 379.

MODERATION IN FRIENDSHIP

Imām ʿAlī ﷺ said:
"Give whatever affection and love you have to your friend, but do not put your entire trust on them (nor disclose all of your secrets to them)." [5]



When maintaining our friendships, one trait that is very important to keep in mind is moderation. Of course we should love, share, and care about our friends and family, but we must also remember our limits. Remember to treat each individual fairly, but also differently. This is because each person has their own boundaries and different things that they feel comfortable with. For example, your friend may have different boundaries than your siblings or parents, and might not feel comfortable with certain things that your family does not even notice.

Additionally, we should follow the necessary Islamic guidelines when interacting physically, verbally, and emotionally with other people, and even while texting or chatting. We should exercise control, and not be nosy even when we feel inquisitive about our friends. It is not necessary for us to know every single thing about what others are doing or who they are with.

WHO TO CHOOSE AS FRIENDS

A true friend is someone who is truly invested in our success in both this world and the next.

Good, righteous friends are a blessing from Allah ﷻ and bring us fun and happiness. They can also keep us in check and advise us to make good decisions. Our friends also have a great influence on us. You may have seen that often your habits and interests change based on the interests of your friends. For this reason, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ has warned us to be very cautious about who we choose to befriend. [6]

In another tradition, Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ narrates that when the disciples of Prophet ʿĪsā ﷺ asked him who they should spend their time with, he replied: "With someone who, when you look at them, reminds you of Allah, their actions motivate you for the hereafter, and when they speak you learn something." [7]

From such *ḥadīth*, we see that a true friend is someone who is truly invested in our success in both this world and the next. You would expect a friend to guide you about what does and does not look good on you for example, but it is even more important to have someone who will guide you to be successful in the next world by reaching your fullest potential. Therefore, we should make a conscious effort to choose friends who will help us become closer to Allah ﷻ, reach our purpose in life, and attain perfection.

5 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 71, P. 165.
6 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 74, P. 192.
7 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 74, P. 186.

Our friends should be those who genuinely care for us, and inspire us to do righteous actions whose interest lies in our well-being. They should truly want to help us on the path to perfection.

Therefore, anyone who wants to help us be successful in this world and the next is a true friend. In reality then, our siblings, our parents, the 14 Maʿṣūmīn ﷺ, and even Allah ﷻ are our sincere friends.

WHAT IF I CANNOT FIND A GOOD FRIEND?

STOP AND REFLECT: Is having a lot of friends who may not be a good influence better, or having a few sincere friends who are going to help us become better?

Having a true friend is a great blessing from Allah ﷻ. If we have such a friend, then we should make sure that we keep them as friends and thank Allah ﷻ for these blessings.

STOP AND REFLECT: How can we make sure to hold on to our good friends?

If we do not have a good friend, then we should not despair, we should ask Allah ﷻ to send us such a friend. We should remember that Allah ﷻ and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ are always there for us. When the people took out Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ from the well, one person said to the others: "Be kind to him for he is a stranger." Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ, who according to tradition was only nine years old at the time, responded:

> "One who is with Allah will never be alone."[8]

Ideally, it would be nice if there were a lot of people who believed in the same things we do, and have the same ethics and practices. But in reality, we live at a time, and in places where typically many people have adopted values and practices that are far from the teachings of the Qurʾān, the Prophets ﷺ, and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. We can be friendly with a larger group of people, and should never be arrogant toward others, but we should not typically expect to have a big number of close friends who share the same beliefs and practices as us.

We can be creative about having friends. Sometimes we may meet someone on a trip, or through attending a conference out of town who would make a good friend. We can keep in touch with them through email or messaging. Occasionally, these people may be our closest friends even though we do not live in the same city.

8 Ḥillī, Warrām ibn Abī Firās, *Tanbīh al-Khawāṭir wa Nuzhat an-Nawāẓir*, Vol. 1, P. 33.

Activity 3.2b: A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed

Imagine you broke your arm during a soccer accident and were stuck in the hospital. You were there all by yourself and felt very lonely. Read the following scenarios and explain why each person is or is not a true friend.

1. A teammate comes to visit you during visiting hours and spends an hour by your side, having brought some gifts to cheer you up, and promises that they will come back and visit you again tomorrow.

2. A teammate asks what you did to break your arm. They tell you that maybe Allah ﷻ does not care about you and that is why this happened.

3. Another teammate comes to visit you unexpectedly just before prayer time and asks how you are. They help you make *wuḍūʾ* and pray, then supplicate for you to have a speedy recovery. They spend time talking and comforting you before promising to come again at the same time tomorrow.

4. Another teammate had taken a video of you crying after you broke your arm. They send you the video and ask why you cried.

5. One of your teammates was not able to visit you in the hospital, but they bring food to your house when you came back home. They come before the next soccer game to play board games with you.

ISLAMIC GREETINGS

Part of maintaining good friendships is to know how to greet one another. Let us quickly learn some rules of Islamic greetings.

Islam encourages us to greet all people in a friendly and kind manner. We should try to be the first one to start a greeting as this was the tradition of our Prophet ﷺ.[9]

If someone else greets us first, then we have to make sure we reply in an equal manner, though we are recommended to reply with a better and even longer greeting.[10]

Shaking hands and hugging other believers of the same gender are also recommended practices that build and strengthen our friendships.[11]

HUMOR

STOP AND REFLECT: Can you think of some good jokes that do not go against Islamic values? Are there any famous comedians who make these kinds of jokes?

Islam is a religion which encourages humor.[12] Humor—when used in a balanced and correct way—can be a way of strengthening relationships with family and friends. However, when joking, we must make sure that we do so within the boundaries of Islam, by adhering to the following points:

- We must not lie (people should understand that you are joking).
- We must not hurt someone else's feelings, make fun of others, or be racist.
- Do not become like a clown by joking way too often, otherwise people will see us as foolish and never take us seriously.
- Do not disrespect holy occasions or places.
- One should not become over-friendly with people of the opposite gender *(non-maḥrams)*.

9 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, P. 644.
10 Suyūṭiy, Jalāl ad-Dīn, *Ad-Durr al-Manthur*, Vol 2, P. 605.
11 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, P. 183.
12 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, P. 663.

Activity 3.2c: Scenarios

DIRECTIONS: Read the following scenarios, and explain what you think each person should do in the given situations:

1. Haniyah is having a hard time making conversations with the girls that she grew up with. They are only interested in talking badly about other people. What should she do?

2. Husayn is having a hard time finding friends at school. He is worried about how to start conversations with new people.

3. Ali notices that the jokes which the boys around him make often hurt other people's feelings, especially when they are playing games. What should he do?

Activity 3.2d: Review Questions

1. A good friend is one who:
   - **a.** Reminds us of playing soccer.
   - **b.** Reminds us of watching TV.
   - **c.** Reminds us of Allah ﷻ.

2. Islam encourages us to:
   - **a.** Keep ourselves away from other human beings.
   - **b.** Build strong friendships with good Muslims.
   - **c.** Tell our friends all of our secrets in life.

3. We will not make good friends if:
   - **a.** We are rude and disrespectful.
   - **b.** We are kind and pious.
   - **c.** We are well-mannered.

4. If we have no friends at all we may become:
   - **a.** Cheerful.
   - **b.** Sociable.
   - **c.** Lonely.

5. Islam encourages us to:
   - **a.** Greet others kindly, and be the first to greet.
   - **b.** Wait for others to greet us.
   - **c.** Not greet others at all.

6. Islam encourages humor, but we have to make sure that we:
   - **a.** Never be serious.
   - **b.** Never lie, never hurt others, and do not become a 'clown.'
   - **c.** Never laugh.

CHAPTER 4

Relationships and Etiquettes

4.1 The Best Speech

4.2 Lying and Honesty

4.3 Trusts and Promises

4.1 The Best Speech

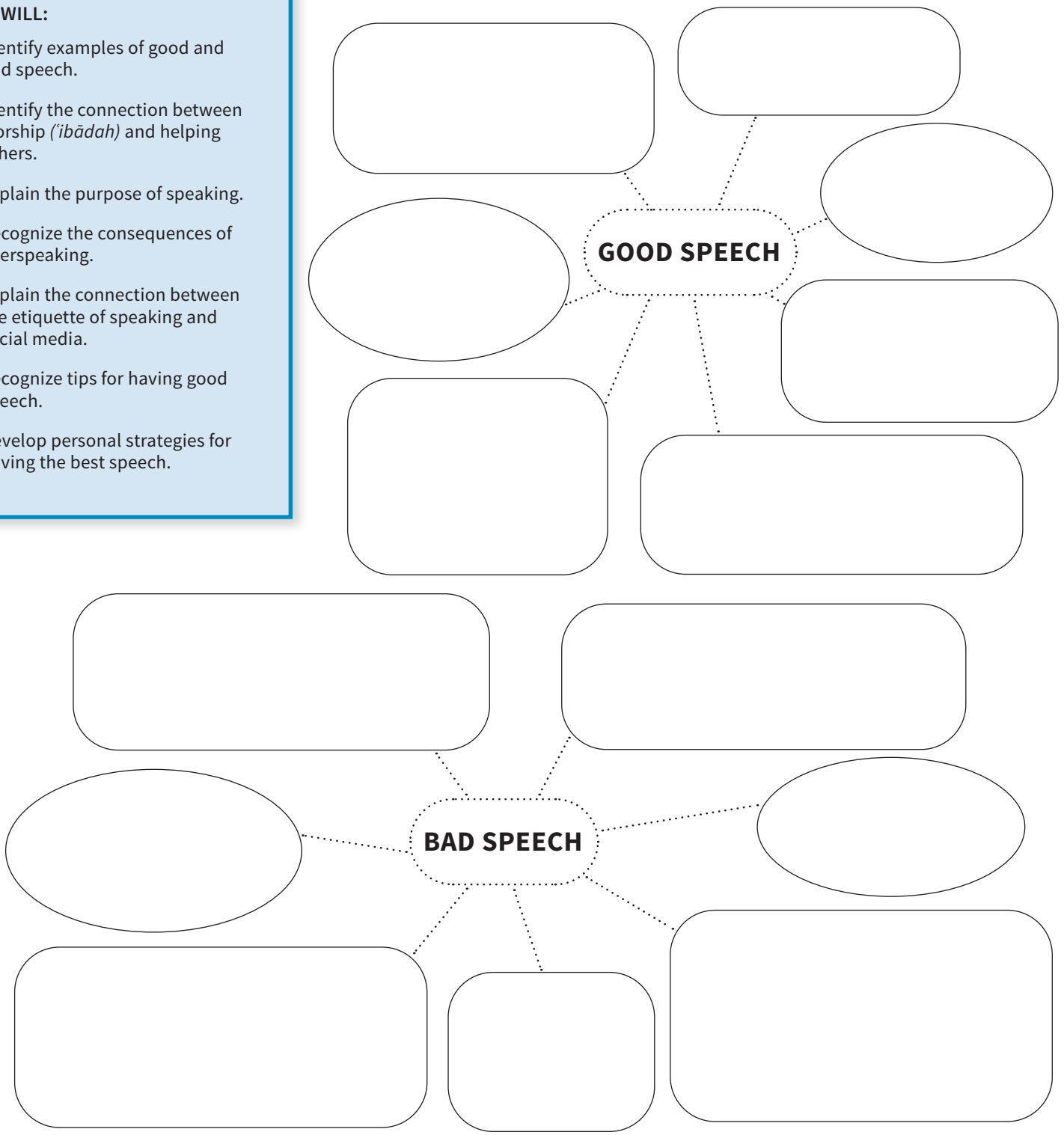
OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify examples of good and bad speech.
- Identify the connection between worship *(ʿibādah)* and helping others.
- Explain the purpose of speaking.
- Recognize the consequences of overspeaking.
- Explain the connection between the etiquette of speaking and social media.
- Recognize tips for having good speech.
- Develop personal strategies for having the best speech.

Activity 4.1a: Pre-Reading Activity

Create a word web of good speech and bad speech (ex: saying thank you, gossiping).



THE BEST SPEECH

Consider the following scenarios:

- Tayyibah prays and fasts, but is rude and arrogant to other people.
- Kulsum speaks sweetly to others, but is lax when it comes to her prayers and other compulsory actions.

STOP AND REFLECT:

1. Whose practice of Islam is better, Tayyibah or Kulsum?
2. What advice would you give to each one of them?

In the above scenarios, we cannot really tell who practices Islam better, and we are not in a position to judge fully. However, there are some concerning issues with both Tayyibah and Kulsum.

When Tayyibah is rude and arrogant with others, it takes her away from Allah ﷻ, even if she is doing her obligatory actions. Her worship *('ibādah)* should help her grow and become closer to Allah ﷻ. It should make her be more like the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ who were always kind and humble to everyone, even those who treated them badly. The more she grows her awareness of Allah ﷻ, the more humble she should become. She should realize that the rights of others *(ḥaqqun nās)* are very important in the eyes of Allah ﷻ, and she needs to look at fixing her actions and behavior with other people.

It is good that Kulsum is kind to others, but she should remember that doing obligatory actions *(wājibāt)* and staying away from the forbidden *(ḥarām)* things will help her get closer to Allah ﷻ. If she does not give importance to her compulsory deeds *(wājibāt)*, then this will keep her from reaching her full potential and true purpose in life. If she fulfills her responsibilities, then this will help her to always say the right thing in the right way at the right time. Also, if Kulsum is kind to other human beings, she should also be kind to herself! Intentionally neglecting her *wājibāt* will be a source of harm to her own spiritual self.

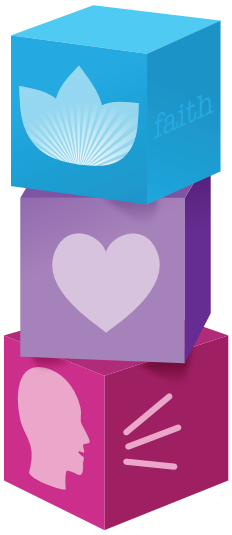
A true Muslim tries to perform and fulfill one's responsibilities in each moment and in every aspect of one's life. Worship *('ibādah)* is very important and absolutely necessary, but Islam is about much more than just formal worship, it is a complete way of life. For example, if our parents ask us to help them with something, but we are reciting Qurʾān or doing something else that is a recommended *(mustaḥab)* action, then it is better for us to leave that thing and help our parents first. It is obligatory *(wājib)* to be kind to our parents, and serving others has a special place with Allah ﷻ.

We can see from the lives of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ that although they did their worship like reciting the Qurʾān, making special duʾās, and praying *Ṣalātul Layl*, they also gave special importance to helping other people. They were generous to their families, the poor people, and anyone in need.

STOP AND REFLECT:

1. How do we imagine that the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ spoke to others?
2. Why is it important to speak the way they did?

Our tongue is a gift from Allah ﷻ, and we must use it in the best way possible as a way to get closer to Him and reach our full potential. It is very easy to say something that is detrimental to our souls, or to others without really thinking. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ explained this to us: "Most of the mistakes human beings make are with their tongue." [1]



Our tongue is also the leader of our other body parts. For example, a fist fight or a brawl might be started because of harsh words. Yet, when we speak kindly to others—like our family members and relatives—then it will lead us to being kinder with them even in our actions. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

> "The faith of a person does not become steady unless their heart becomes steady, and one's heart will not become steady unless their tongue becomes steady [and controlled]." [2]

Communication is a very powerful tool. It allows us to learn from one another and optimize our potential to reach higher levels of humanity, and progress toward our ultimate goal which is perfection. But, when it is done incorrectly, then communication can destroy people and relationships.

Islam has provided detailed guidelines on how to communicate in a way that pleases Allah ﷻ. In one of our previous lessons, we talked about communication with ourselves (or reflection), and communication with Allah ﷻ, the Prophet ﷺ and his Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. In this lesson, we will discuss communication with other people, and social communication.

Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:
And when We took a pledge from the Children of Isrāʾīl that: 'Worship no one except Allah, and do good to parents, relatives, orphans, and the needy, and speak kindly to people, and maintain the prayer, and give charity.' [3]

In this verse, speaking kindly to people is mentioned even before prayer and charity. This shows that worshiping Allah ﷻ includes speaking kindly to others.

In this verse, Allah ﷻ does not go into detail about what speaking kindly to others means. This is because our intellect guides us to what is the best thing to say in different circumstances. Of course, we have to keep in mind the guidelines that the Islamic laws *(Sharīʿah)* outlines for us about what is acceptable and what is not such as: backbiting, lying, swearing, etc.

1 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 71, P. 286.
2 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 68, P. 287.
3 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 83.

THINKING BEFORE WE SPEAK

STOP AND REFLECT:

1. What is the purpose of speaking?
2. Have you ever said something that you later regretted saying?
3. What are some of the consequences of overspeaking?

We have all had the experience of regretting something that we said in the past. The reason this happens is because we often do not think before we speak. Sometimes, it might seem like the culture of social interactions is fast-paced, and it may feel awkward to sit in silence. However, our words can often profoundly harm or hurt others. In numerous *ḥadīth* of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, they have told us that the sanctity of a believer is greater than the sanctity of the Kaʾbah.[4] Take a moment to reflect on this. How do we treat or view the Kaʾbah?

In previous lessons we learned about *ḥaqqullāh*, the rights of Allah ﷻ, and *ḥaqqun nās*, the rights of people. Allah ﷻ cares about the dignity of people as a whole, and His sincere believers have additional dignity. In a *ḥadīth* from Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, we learn that whoever belittles a believer, whether they are poor or not, that person will be belittled themself until they stop belittling others.[5] Belittling happens through treating someone disrespectfully, and one of the most common examples of this is making fun of others.

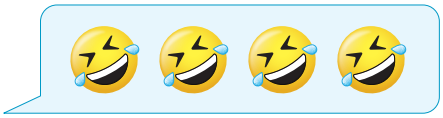
The sanctity of a believer is greater than the sanctity of the Kaʾbah.

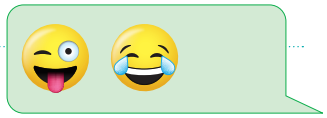
Overspeaking or speaking too quickly can lead us to say things without thinking them through. For example, if some people are making jokes at the expense of others, you may want to add a quick joke to keep the laughter going, but then realize afterwards that what you said was not very kind. If we are joking with someone else, we should make sure that the joke is okay to make, and will not be hurtful. The Prophet ﷺ appreciated jokes, but only if they were proper, did not involve lies, and did not harm or offend other people.[6]

4 Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Al-Khiṣāl*, Vol. 1, P. 27.
5 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 72, P. 44.
6 Ibn Abil Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, Vol. 6, P. 330.

We may even ridicule or belittle people without realizing it. When we think about the way we speak with others, we should hold ourselves to a high standard. We should not do or say anything that could insult the dignity of a believer. This is why we should even be very careful when we are mentioning our own accomplishments, wealth, or possessions, and not talk arrogantly or boastfully, or in a way that might make another person feel unaccomplished. Remember to be thankful, and know that everything we have comes from Allah ﷻ.

THE BEST SPEECH ONLINE





STOP AND REFLECT:

1. What is the purpose of social media?
2. What do people use social media for?
3. Do the rules of interacting with others change when we are texting or using social media?
4. What are some examples of uses for social media that may seem good, but are actually wrong?

Being careful of our words is not only limited to what we say to people with our tongues, but also what we say and write through email, statuses, posts, texting, and of course on any platform of social media. What we say or type online is still recorded in our book of deeds, so we have to remember the guidelines of Islam and make sure whatever we are writing or posting is appropriate and good.

We have to be careful how, and who we talk to on social media. People may use social media to connect with others or share their hobbies which can be beneficial, but sometimes even these things can be negative. For example, an individual may joke around with someone of the opposite gender; or a person may look at or like pictures where they are trying to be over friendly with someone else; or one may want to bring negative attention toward themselves. Someone might use social media to talk down to others, or show off what they have.

We should always remember our purpose in life in everything we do or say, including if and when we want to use social media. It is okay not to use social media when there is no good reason or purpose for it. It is okay to choose not to post, or to take a break from posting if you realize that you are doing it for the wrong reasons, or have become too attached to it. Our interactions on social media remain forever—so we need to be very careful. If someone tries to interact with you that you are not comfortable with, there is no reason to reply, and you can always talk to a trusted adult if you need help.

HOW TO HAVE THE BEST SPEECH

1. Surround Ourselves with Good People	After spending time with someone, we may realize that they speak better than us. They do not complain, or speak badly about others. We should try to spend more time with these people so that we can build good habits.
2. Build our Connection with Allah ﷻ and the Maʾṣumīn ﷺ	A true connection with Allah ﷻ and the Maʿṣūmīn ﷺ can help us to fight off the inclination to be unpleasant or rude, and instead become better for the sake of the Almighty. We should pray to Allah ﷻ that we can learn to speak better; and ask the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ to help us become more like them.
3. Remembrance of Allah ﷻ	We should recite the Qurʾān regularly, and keep the Words of Allah ﷻ in our hearts and on our tongues. It will allow our communication to be free of language that consists of anger, jealousy, or hurtful words—and it is this kind of conversation that will truly be beneficial. Eventually we will find that all of our conversations, even our jokes, are being made with Allah's approval in mind. This will strengthen our God-consciousness *(taqwā)*, and help us become better human beings in all areas of our lives.
4. Reflect on our Speech	Reflecting on our actions every day can help us communicate with others better. For example, you might realize that you often lash out at a certain individual, or pick on someone. When you observe this through reflection, then you will stop yourself next time from doing this. If someone lashes out at you, if you think about it for a while, you may realize that it had nothing to do with you—maybe they were just having a bad day. This enables us to be more understanding of others, and be more patient with them. If we say something, then realize that we should not have said it, we can ask for forgiveness from Allah ﷻ, and try to fix ourselves.

Activity 4.1b: Visualize it!

DIRECTIONS: Read the verses from Sūrah Ibrāhīm below, then draw the two different types of trees mentioned in these verses in the space provided.

Have you not considered how Allah draws a parable? A good word is like a good tree: whose roots are steady and its branches are in the sky. It gives its fruit all of the time, by the permission of its Lord. Allah draws these parables for humankind so that they may take admonition. And the parable of a bad word is that of a bad tree: uprooted from the ground, it has no stability. [7]

REFLECTION: How do you think our words reflect these two types of trees?

7 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14), Verses 24-26.

Activity 4.1c: Personal Reflection

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions, then fill in the reflection calendar below.

1. What are some bad speech habits that you have fallen into? (No need to share these)

a) What are some strategies you want to use in order to fix these habits?

b) Are there situations that you can avoid to keep yourself from some of these inappropriate habits?

c) Are there people you can surround yourself with who have good speech?

Activity 4.1c: Personal Reflection (Continued)

2. What are some good speech habits that you want to begin?

a) Which of your bad speech habits can you replace with good ones?

3. Do you use social media? Why or why not?

a) What are social media habits that you would like to fix (if you have social media)?

4. Over the next week, write down your goals in regards to speaking, and reflect on how you did each day. For example:

   GOAL: Speak kindly to my siblings (because I was harsh with them yesterday).

   REFLECTION: Today I was better about speaking kindly, but I did say some things that they did not like, so I want to improve these tomorrow, inshāʾAllāh.

SUN	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
MON	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
TUE	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
WED	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
THU	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
FRI	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**
SAT	**GOAL:** **REFLECTION:**

4.2 Lying and Honesty

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Explain what several narrations *(ḥadīth)* say about lying.
- Recognize the consequences of lying.
- Identify the reasons why some people lie.
- Explain how lying can be avoided.
- Recognize what the Noble Qurʾān says about lying.
- Analyze real-life situations where people have had to face consequences for lying.

Activity 4.2a: Ḥadīth Analysis

Read the following *ḥadīth*, then answer the questions below in pairs.

It has been narrated from Imām ar-Riḍā ﷺ that:
The Seal of the Prophets (Prophet Muḥammad) was asked if a believer could possibly be cowardly and timid. 'Yes,' he replied. Then they asked him: 'Can they be stingy?' 'Yes,' he answered. 'Can they be a liar?' they further questioned him. 'No! A believer can take on any nature (behavior) except for lying and betrayal,' came the Prophet's emphatic reply.[4]

Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ said:
Lying is the ruin of faith.[5]

Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn Ḥanẓalah narrated that Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said:
One who is only verbally in agreement with us, but is opposed to our deeds and words is not one of our followers. Shīʾahs are those who not only say that they agree with us, but they also accept us in their hearts; and they follow our writings and actions. They are our true followers.[6]

1. Explain, in your own words, what each *ḥadīth* is saying about lying.

2. Why do you think lying is such a detested sin?

3. What are some of the consequences of lying?

4 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 72, P. 172.
5 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 72, P. 247.
6 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 65, P. 164.

To be sincerely truthful is to be sure that our words fully match our actions, and our actions match our words. When we say that we are Muslims and followers of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, we should ensure that our actions align with this. The Ahlul Bayt ﷺ were perfect examples of moral character. Their true followers should follow them and try to perfect their character and manners.

CONSEQUENCES OF LYING

Lying is a form of deception. Deception means to cause someone to believe something that is not true. It is often done just to gain some personal advantage. For example, if my parents ask me if I did my homework and I lie and say 'yes' when in fact I have not done it yet, this is deception.

When someone lies in order to deceive others, they are in reality deceiving and harming themselves more than others. We cannot deceive Allah ﷻ because He knows what is in our hearts. In the Qurʾān, Allah ﷻ says the following about the hypocrites:

They seek to deceive Allah and those who have faith, yet they deceive no one but themselves, but they are not aware. There is a sickness in their hearts; so Allah increases their sickness, and there is a painful punishment for them because of the lies they used to tell.[7]

WHY DO PEOPLE LIE?

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some of the reasons why people lie?

Some common reasons why people lie are:

1. They are too concerned about maintaining a certain image with others to the point where they are willing to bend the truth in order to keep that image.
2. They want to avoid being embarrassed about something.
3. Sometimes people lie in order to avoid certain consequences. For example, a student will be talking in class when they are not supposed to. When the teacher asks them if they were talking, they lie to get out of trouble. Or sometimes kids may lie to their parents about having done something because they do not want to have to face the consequences of their actions.
4. They want others to have a good laugh.
5. Sometimes people want to reach a certain goal without putting in much effort; for example, a student cheats on a test so they can get good grades without working, but then lies that they did not cheat.

If we lie in order to reach a goal, the blessings we might have gained from that thing we wanted will not be worth much. Imām Husayn ﷺ said:

> "When a person tries to achieve a goal by disobeying Allah, this will cause them to miss out on what they hoped to gain, and (they will have) to face what they feared even quicker."[8]

It may seem like lying is helping us achieve our immediate and temporary goals, but in reality, every action that we do has real consequences. Someone might achieve short term gains by lying, but in the long run they will not truly get blessings from their results.

7 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verses 9-10.
8 Shaykh Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, P. 373.

HOW CAN LYING BE AVOIDED?

Once, Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ was walking with his son, Ismāʿīl, and a friend. When they reached the Imām's house, the Imām ﷺ did not invite the man inside. Later on, Ismāʿīl asked the Imām ﷺ: "Why did you not invite him inside?" The Imām said: "I was not ready to receive him as a guest." His son told him: "You could have invited him just as a formality. He may not have actually accepted!" The Imām ﷺ replied: "I do not want Allah to count me among the people who pretend."[9]

If we remember that our purpose in life is to get closer to Allah ﷻ, then we will not be overly concerned about what people think, or whether all of our desires are met or not, as long as we are fulfilling our responsibilities. We will not care about wealth or other worldly pleasures to the point where we will have to distort the truth. We will not care about whether we will lose anything by telling the truth—in fact, we would not even think about lying because we know that it displeases our Lord, and will cause us to be real losers!

In order to train ourselves to stop lying, we have to remember a few important points:

- To do what Allah ﷻ tells us is right is more important than our desires or making other people happy. Therefore, we should please Allah ﷻ by telling the truth, even if this might seem bad for us at first.
- Lying usually leads to more lying; so if we lie the first time, we will have to keep weaving lies to uphold our lies, and this will cause added stress.
- The truth always comes out sooner or later, and liars will eventually be exposed. Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

And say: 'Truth has come and falsehood (bāṭil) has vanished. Surely, falsehood is bound to vanish.' [10]

Sometimes, we see that public figures get away with lying. This can be due to certain reasons such as: **(i)** these figures abuse their position of power; **(ii)** people who elected them are too complacent and unwilling to speak out against injustice; or **(iii)** society's morality as a whole has become so low that lying is acceptable and even appreciated. Oftentimes, these individuals will eventually be exposed and embarrassed during their lifetimes. But we should remember that even if they are 'able to get away with their deceit in this life,' Allah ﷻ is All-Just, and on the Day of Judgment everything will be revealed and compensated for accordingly.

LYING SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED

Lying is so discouraged in Islam that it teaches us to speak out against those who lie. Allah ﷻ told the Children of Isrāʾīl not to lie in the Noble Qurʾān:

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

And do not mix the truth with the falsehood, nor conceal the truth while you know (it).[11]

This command of course is not only for the Children of Isrāʾīl who used to hide parts of the Torah when it was not to their advantage, but it is for anyone who is conscious of Allah ﷻ in all aspects of their life. The verse clearly says that we should not conceal or hide the truth when we know it.

Also, we should not listen to liars, obey, or follow them. Imām al-Bāqir ﷺ said: "Whoever listens to [and follows] a speaker has indeed worshiped them. So if a speaker speaks on behalf of Allah, then they have obeyed Allah; and if they speak on behalf of *Shayṭān*, then they have obeyed *Shayṭān*."[12] We need to be careful about who we are listening to, and who we are being influenced by. Many actors and singers present a distorted version of reality which promotes immorality. People who listen to their songs tend to be influenced by their words and lifestyles.

Not following or obeying liars means that we should not take as leaders people who do not tell the truth, like many corrupt politicians. Instead, we should listen to truthful people, who teach us about Allah ﷻ, the Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ, our religion, and those who guide us in making correct decisions.

9 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 3, P. 457.
10 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Isrāʾ(17), Verse 81.
11 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verse 42.
12 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 6, P. 434.

Activity 4.2b: Read and Discuss

You will be assigned one of the two articles below to read. After reading the article, answer the following reflection questions.

https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/27/us/27mit.html
https://www.mysuncoast.com/2020/10/15/c-span-debate-moderator-didnt-post-questionable-tweet/

1. Summarize the article in your own words (1-3 sentences).

2. Who was lying? What were they trying to achieve by lying?

3. Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ said: "When a person tries to achieve a goal by disobeying Allah, this will cause them to miss out on what they hoped to gain, and (they will have) to face what they feared even quicker." [13]

   How does this *ḥadīth* relate to the article? Were they able to achieve their goals through lying?

13 *Al-Kāfī,* Vol. 2, P. 373.

The New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/27/us/27mit.html

Dean at M.I.T. Resigns, Ending a 28-Year Lie

Marilee Jones, who arrived at M.I.T. in 1979, became well known as a leader of the movement to tame the college admissions frenzy.
Chitose Suzuki/Associated Press

By Tamar Lewin

April 27, 2007

Marilee Jones, the dean of admissions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, became well known for urging stressed-out students competing for elite colleges to calm down and stop trying to be perfect. Yesterday she admitted that she had fabricated her own educational credentials, and resigned after nearly three decades at M.I.T. Officials of the institute said she did not have even an undergraduate degree.

“I misrepresented my academic degrees when I first applied to M.I.T. 28 years ago and did not have the courage to correct my résumé when I applied for my current job or at any time since,” Ms. Jones said in a statement posted on the institute’s Web site. “I am deeply sorry for this and for disappointing so many in the M.I.T. community and beyond who supported me, believed in me, and who have given me extraordinary opportunities.”

Ms. Jones said that she would not make any other public comment “at this personally difficult time” and that she hoped her privacy would be respected.

Ms. Jones, 55, originally from Albany, had on various occasions represented herself as having degrees from three upstate New York institutions: Albany Medical College, Union College and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In fact, she had no degrees from any of those places, or anywhere else, M.I.T. officials said.

A spokesman for Rensselaer said Ms. Jones had not graduated there, though she did attend as a part-time nonmatriculated student during the 1974-75 school year. The other colleges said they had no record of her.

Phillip L. Clay, M.I.T.’s chancellor, said in an interview that a college degree was probably not required for Ms. Jones’s entry-level job in the admissions office when she arrived in 1979. And by the time she was appointed admissions dean in 1997, Professor Clay said, she had already been in the admissions office for many years, and apparently little effort was made to check what she had earlier presented as her credentials.

“In the future,” he said, “we will take a big lesson from this experience.”

Since last fall, Ms. Jones had been making speeches around the country to promote her book, “Less Stress, More Success: A New Approach to Guiding Your Teen Through College Admissions and Beyond,” written with a pediatrician, Dr. Kenneth R. Ginsburg. The book had added to her reputation as a kind of guru of the movement to tame the college admissions frenzy.

“Less Stress, More Success” addresses not only the pressure to be perfect but also a need to live with integrity.

“Holding integrity is sometimes very hard to do because the temptation may be to cheat or cut corners,” it says. “But just remember that ‘what goes around comes around,’ meaning that life has a funny way of giving back what you put out.”

Professor Clay said the dean for undergraduate education, Daniel Hastings, received information 10 days ago questioning Ms. Jones's academic background. M.I.T. officials would not say who had provided the information.

"There are some mistakes people can make for which 'I'm sorry' can be accepted, but this is one of those matters where the lack of integrity is sufficient all by itself," Professor Clay said. "This is a very sad situation for her and for the institution. We have obviously placed a lot of trust in her."

On the campus, where Ms. Jones was widely admired, almost revered, for her humor, outspokenness and common sense, students and faculty members alike seemed both saddened and shocked.

"It's like a Thomas Hardy tragedy, because she did so much good, but something she did long ago came back and trumped it," said one friend, Leslie C. Perelman, director of Writing Across the Curriculum at M.I.T.

Mike Hurley, a freshman chemistry student, said, "It was surprising," adding, "Everyone who was admitted here probably knows her, at least her name."

Mr. Hurley said that the admissions office had been unusually accessible, with Ms. Jones's "bright" personality and blogs for incoming students.

"Whenever someone's integrity is questioned," he said, "it sets a bad example, but I feel like the students can get past that and look at what she's done for us as a whole."

Rachel Ellman, who studies aerospace engineering, said, "I feel like she's irreplaceable."

Ms. Jones had received the institute's highest honor for administrators, the M.I.T. Excellence Award for Leading Change, and many college admissions officers and high school college counselors said yesterday that whatever her personal shortcomings, her efforts deserved respect.

"She's been working and presenting a lot of important ideas about our business," said Rod Skinner, director of college counseling at Milton Academy, the Massachusetts prep school. "What I'm hoping is that the quality of the research and the book will hold up."

Ms. Jones was hired by the admissions office in 1979 to recruit young women, who at the time made up only 17 percent of the institute's undergraduates, compared with nearly half today.

Since she entered the field, admissions to M.I.T. and other elite institutions have become increasingly competitive, and she made her mark with her efforts to turn down the flame of competition.

Among other things, she told students that they did not need perfect SAT scores to get into M.I.T. She also redesigned the institute's application form, leaving less space for students to list their extracurricular activities, so as not to imply that every student needed 10 activities to fill the 10 lines that used to be there.

Competition remains fierce, though. For the coming fall, M.I.T. accepted 12 percent of 12,443 applicants.

Those who attended this month's events for admitted students said Ms. Jones had been in good spirits, especially at a Saturday night finale. There, Ms. Jones, who in younger days was a torch singer at upstate New York clubs, took part in a "battle of the bands," singing, "You Can't Always Get What You Want."

Correction: April 30, 2007

A front page article Friday on the resignation of Marilee Jones, M.I.T.'s dean of admissions, misidentified Leslie Perelman, a faculty member who commented on her resignation. He is the director of Writing Across the Curriculum at M.I.T., not the director of the M.I.T. program in writing and humanistic studies.

Christy McKerney contributed reporting from Cambridge, Mass., and Sara Rimer from Boston.

https://www.mysuncoast.com/2020/10/15/c-span-debate-moderator-didnt-post-questionable-tweet/

C-SPAN: Debate moderator suspended after admitting to lying about his twitter feed being hacked

C-SPAN suspends Scully after he admits to lie about hack (Associated Press)

By ABC7 Staff
Updated: Oct. 15, 2020 at 3:45 PM UTC

NEW YORK (ABC News)-- C-SPAN suspended its political editor Steve Scully indefinitely Thursday after he admitted to lying about his Twitter feed being hacked when he was confronted about a questionable exchange with former Trump aide Anthony Scaramucci.

The news came on the day of what was supposed to be a career highlight for the 30-year C-SPAN veteran. Scully was to moderate the second debate between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, which was canceled after Trump would not agree to a virtual format because of his COVID-19 diagnosis.

A week ago, after Trump had criticized him as a "never Trumper," Scully tweeted "@Scaramucci should I respond to Trump." Scaramucci, a former Trump communications director and now a critic of the president, advised Scully to ignore him.

Scully said that when he saw his tweet had created a controversy, "I falsely claimed that my Twitter account had been hacked."

He had been frustrated by Trump's comments and several weeks of criticism on social media and conservative news outlets about his role as moderator, including attacks directed at his family, he said.

"These were both errors in judgement for which I am totally responsible for," Scully said. "I apologize."

He said he let down his colleagues at C-SPAN, fellow news professionals and the debate commission. "I ask for their forgiveness as I try to move forward in a moment of reflection and disappointment in myself," he said.

C-SPAN said Scully confessed to lying about the hack on Wednesday.

"He understands that he made a serious mistake," the network said. "We were very saddened by this news and do not condone his actions."

Trump seized on the news, tweeting "I was right again! I was right again! Steve Scully just admitted he was lying about his Twitter being hacked. The Debate was Rigged!"

The debate commission did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

Scully has led the network's presidential election coverage since 1992, but the suspension means he won't be part of C-SPAN's election night programming. Scully has been the moderator of "Washington Journal," the weekly call-in program, and regularly hosted other C-SPAN programs.

The network said Scully has consistently demonstrated fairness and professionalism, and built a reservoir of good will.

"After some distance from this episode, we believe in his ability to continue to contribute to C-SPAN," the network said.

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Activity 4.2c: Review Questions

1. Lying in action means:

   a. Lying when you are walking.
   b. When one's actions do not match up with their beliefs.
   c. Lying all of the time.

2. The worst consequence of lying is:

   a. People will not like us.
   b. We will be deceiving ourselves.
   c. Allah ﷻ will withhold His blessings from us.

3. People lie to:

   a. Get out of some kind of trouble.
   b. Get something they want.
   c. Both a & b.

4. We can train ourselves to stop lying by:

   a. Remembering that what Allah ﷻ wants is the most important thing.
   b. Remembering that lying will lead to more lying.
   c. Both a & b.

4.3 Trusts and Promises

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Explain why it is important to be trustworthy.
- Contrast the difference between the rights of Allah ﷻ—*ḥaqqullāh*, and the rights of people—*ḥaqqun nās*.
- Identify examples of upholding promises, keeping secrets, and being punctual.
- Understand the importance of keeping promises by examining the rulings of breaking a covenant—*ʿahd* to Allah ﷻ.

STOP AND REFLECT: Why is it important to be trustworthy?

Trustworthiness is one of the most important obligations in Islam. On a social level, trustworthiness means 'to fulfill the trust that a person has been given.' For example, if someone gives you money to keep safe before they go on a journey, then to return this money exactly the way they entrusted it to you is an example of being trustworthy. Another example is when a person tells you a secret: a trustworthy person would keep the secret safe and would not spread it or tell anyone else, unless there is a very urgent need to do so that overrides the importance of keeping the secret, such as if someone is in danger.

The best example of being trustworthy was that of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. He was so dependable and honorable in his lifestyle and business practices that the people used to call him *aṣ-Ṣādiq*—the Truthful one, and *al-Amīn*—the Trustworthy one.

STOP AND REFLECT: Think about the most trustworthy person you know. It may be a parent, a teacher, or a friend. Would you believe them even if they told you something that was quite unbelievable?

The perfect character of the final Prophet ﷺ was known by his friends, as well as his enemies. Those people who knew how the Prophet ﷺ was but still did not follow him, denied him only because of their arrogance and pride. Many who knew his character and had pure hearts quickly believed and followed the Prophet ﷺ when he declared his Prophethood *(Nubuwwah)*.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUSTEE

ḤAQQULLĀH:
rights of Allah

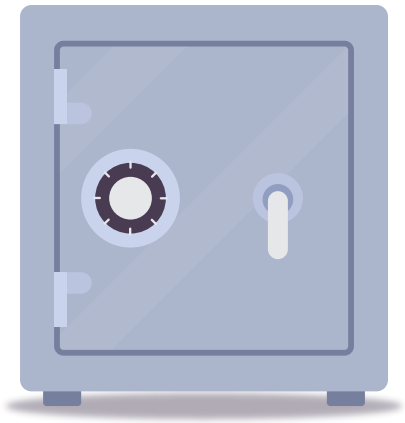
ḤAQQUN-NĀS:
rights of people

We have two categories of responsibilities to fulfill in Islam: ***ḥaqqullāh***—the rights of Allah ﷻ, and ***ḥaqqun nās***—rights of people. *Ḥaqqullāh* are those responsibilities which we have only toward Allah ﷻ, like prayers *(ṣalāh)*, fasting *(ṣawm)*, *Ḥajj*, etc. Allah ﷻ has given us many trusts in the form of giving us ownership over our body, mind, soul, and the choices that we make. He gave us these blessings so we can worship Him through them, and help other people. One day we will be asked about how we used all of these trusts. When Imam ʿAlī ؑ would recite his daily prayers, the color of his face would change and his body would begin to shake. When he was asked why, he replied:

The time has now arrived to fulfill the trust. It was offered to the skies, the earth, and the mountains, but they all refused to bear it, while human beings chose to bear it![1]

1 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 81, P. 248.

Everything we have belongs to Allah ﷻ. Our duty is to take care of them while we are alive, and return them to Him in the state in which they were meant to be returned. We need to take care of our bodies and our souls, and not harm them. For example, we should not avoid eating if our body needs food, yet we should not overeat because we want more food. Everything we do in life, if we do it with the intention of getting closer to Allah ﷻ, then all of it—even eating, sleeping, working, etc.—can be a form of worship *(ʿibādah)*!



The second category—*ḥaqqun nās*—are rights that other people have over us. When someone entrusts us with something, we have a responsibility to fulfill that trust. If we truly want to follow the examples of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, and bring people closer to Allah ﷻ, then we have to do so with our character and behavior. This includes returning a trust to its rightful owner in the same condition that it was given. For example, if someone gave you their laptop to take care of, then it becomes your responsibility to return that laptop in the same condition you received it, unless something out of your control happens—despite you being careful with it. If the laptop is damaged because of you not taking care of it properly, then you will be liable for repairing or replacing it.

Secondly, it is the responsibility of the person being entrusted to not use the trust for personal gain. For example, if someone gives you their bicycle to look after, then you should return it the way it was given to you. You should not ride it or use it, unless the owner allows you to use it. Imām ʿAlī ﷺ said:

> "Do not betray a person who trusts you, even if they betray you; and do not disclose their secrets, even if they disclose yours."[2]

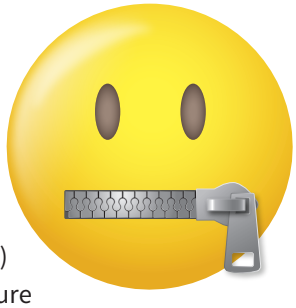
We learn from this narration that we must not break anyone's trust.

Imām Zaynul ʿĀbidīn ﷺ is famous to have said that even if the killer of his father, Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, were to leave the sword with which he killed the 3rd Imām ﷺ with him, he would fulfill the trust and give it back to him.[3]

We learn from these examples that we must fulfill all trusts—whether they are given to us by Muslims, non-Muslims, friends, or enemies.

2 Muḥaddith Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil*, Vol. 9, P. 136.
3 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 74, P. 196.

KEEPING SECRETS



Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said: "When someone says something (to you) then looks around (as if to make sure that no one else heard them), their speech becomes a trust and a secret (and we must uphold that)."[4] One of our great scholars, Āyatullāh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī, explains that we should be careful with people's secrets even if they do not explicitly say that something is a secret. For example, if your friend is about to tell you something, but before they do, they look around to see if anyone else is listening, then this is sufficient enough to show that what they are about to tell you is a secret.

Generally, we should not repeat what other people say to us even if we think there is a possibility that it was not something private. However, if a friend tells you a secret that you think could put them in danger, then you should talk to a trusted adult, but do not spread rumors about the secret to unnecessary people. For example, if your friend tells you that they have been talking to or are being followed by a stranger, then you should tell a trusted adult that can address the problem, but you should not tell any of your friends.

KEEPING OUR PROMISES

Keeping promises that we make, and speaking the truth have been mentioned many times in the Qurʾān, as well as in the sayings and actions of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qurʾān:

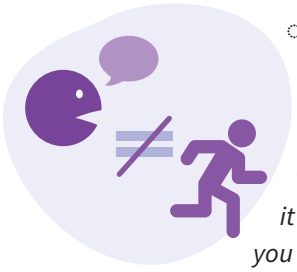
وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا ۝

And fulfill the covenant. Verily, the covenant will be questioned about.[5]

It is our duty and responsibility, as this verse states, to keep our promises and speak the truth.

IF YOU MAKE A PROMISE, THEN KEEP IT

If we want to be true believers, then we should make sure that we do whatever we say we will do. If we say we will do something but then do not do that, we should be aware that we will be questioned by Allah ﷻ, and we will earn His displeasure. Allah ﷻ says in the Qurʾān:



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ۝
كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ۝

O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? Most hateful it is with Allah that you say that which you do not do.[6]

If we are unsure whether we can keep a certain promise or not, then we should not make that promise in the first place. Instead, we should say that we will try or we might be able to do something, but we cannot make any promises. If someone makes a definite promise to do something without any conditions (for example, one says that they promise to do something, and they do not even say *inshāʾAllāh*—if Allah ﷻ wills), then according to Islamic laws, they need to fulfill this promise to the best extent possible. On a jurisprudence *(fiqhī)* level, some *marājiʿ* say that fulfilling this is compulsory according to precaution, while others say that it is recommended. All *marājiʿ* say that making a promise while one has no intention to fulfill it, is not allowed and is a type of a lie.

BEING PUNCTUAL (ON TIME)

One of the outcomes of the five daily prayers is to train us to be punctual and perform our duties on time. Being lazy about our spiritual and worldly commitments is highly discouraged, and can lead us to become negligent about our affairs as well. One of the ways in which people sometimes break promises is when it comes to time. Someone might promise to show up at their friend's house at a certain time, but then they show up unjustifiably late.

4 Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍāʾ*, Vol. 5, P. 237.
5 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Isrāʾ (17), Verse 34.
6 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaff (61), Verses 2-3.

Before making any promise, we should first think it through and see whether we are going to be able to follow it through or not. If we are not sure, then we should not make a definite promise. For example, we can say: "Unless something unexpected comes up, I will do this *inshāʾAllāh*," or "I will try my best, *inshāʾAllāh*." Then, we should try our best to fulfill our commitments. According to Āyatullāh Sistani, if one is unable to maintain a trusted item, then it is impermissible for them to accept it in the first place. If they accept it and it becomes ruined, then they are responsible for that because they were a guarantor (a *Ḍāmin*) for it.

THE PROBLEM OF BREAKING PROMISES

As Muslims, and especially followers of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, we want to make sure that we speak our words with good and true intentions. Sometimes, we make promises to people in our day-to-day lives without noticing or realizing the great responsibility of keeping them. For example, we might promise our little brother or sister to take them out and play with them, or promise our mom that we will help more around the house, or promise to show up at a certain time to help with a volunteer event. But then we either forget our promises, or back out of them when it starts to get too hard. Parents may promise their children an expensive gift, or someone may agree to help another person with a problem, but then individuals later realize that these promises are too difficult to keep. These acts are not liked by Allah ﷻ as we read in the verse above. Therefore, before we make any promise, we need to first think over things carefully and see whether we can keep a certain promise or not. If we will not be able to fulfill it, then it is far better to not make the promise in the first place.

HYPOCRITES BREAK PROMISES

A person who frequently breaks their promises is considered to have one of the characteristics of a hypocrite. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

> The signs of a hypocrite are three: when they speak, they lie; when they make a promise, they break it; and when they are entrusted (with something), they betray (that trust).[7]

Even if we promise a disbeliever or an enemy something, we must fulfill that. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ signed a peace treaty with the disbelievers who were fighting Muslims at the time, and he made sure not to violate or break that treaty in any way.

Of course, we must make sure not to make any promises that will lead to us having to do something *ḥarām*. We are never allowed to do anything which is not permitted in Islam, even if we have promised to do it.

We should also not promise to do something that is not possible for us to do.

7 Pāyāndeh, Abul Qāsim, *Nahj al-Faṣāḥah,* P. 422, Ḥadīth #1280.

BREAKING A COVENANT (ʿAHD) TO ALLAH ﷻ

The following jurisprudential ruling also shows the importance of a promise or a covenant *(ʿahd)*. If someone makes a covenant or a promise to Allah ﷻ to do a certain act for the sake of Allah ﷻ[8] but later breaks it out of their own will, then in addition to seeking forgiveness, one must also give a penalty, known in Arabic as a *kaffārah*. This penalty involves feeding a number of poor people, or fasting for a lengthy period of time.

CONCLUSION

1. A truly believing Muslim must keep their promises under all circumstances. Keeping promises, including being punctual and doing what one says they will do, is a sign of a true believer.
2. Trustworthiness is an extremely important social rule in Islam, and is highly encouraged as shown by our Prophets ﷺ and Imāms ﷺ.
3. Our body and soul are a trust from Allah ﷻ which we must take care of to the best of our ability.
4. When we are told a secret from someone, we must not divulge this information to anyone else.
5. Finally, trustworthiness is an obligation with no exceptions. Even if our enemy entrusts us with something, we must fulfill that trust—within the limits of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*.

8 Please note that this ruling applies only when someone makes a verbal promise to Allah ﷻ out loud in a special manner. It does not apply if someone just makes a mental promise to Allah ﷻ, although such promises are good to try and keep as well. The details of this ruling can be found in the practical law books of the *marājiʿ*.

Activity 4.3a: Scenarios

DIRECTIONS: Read the following scenarios, then write down why the decision might be difficult for the person to uphold, and what they should do in that situation. Then, discuss it with the class.

1. Mujtaba and his friend, Zayn, go bike riding. Zayn breaks his bike, and tells Mujtaba not to tell their other friends until it is fixed. The next day, Mujtaba and his other friends go out bike riding, and they ask why Zayn did not join them. What should Mujtaba say?

2. Asiyah's uncle asks her if she can help him by babysitting his daughter. Asiyah is about to leave her friend's house to go to her uncle's house, but her friends tell her to stay longer. What should Asiyah do?

3. Sarah is supposed to check on her friend's plants while she is away, but she gets busy with other things and remembers very late to check on them. What should she do?

4. Husayn tells his mom that if he is allowed to stay home and not go shopping with her, then he will do his chores. However, as soon as she leaves, he realizes that his favorite show is coming on TV. What should Husayn do?

Activity 4.3b: Skits

DIRECTIONS: Create a skit where a person has to decide whether to break another person's trust or promise, or do the right thing using the examples above, or your own examples. After your skit, explain why the decision was difficult for the person in the skit, and how they overcame it.

CHAPTER 5

Media and Entertainment

5.1 Entertainment in Our Lives

5.2 Media Literacy

5.1 Entertainment in Our Lives

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify how entertainment can sometimes be harmful.
- Recognize why our time needs to be spent wisely.
- Identify the different types of entertainment: including mental, social, and media entertainment, and physical activities.
- Explain how good entertainment can help us balance our lives.
- Develop personal strategies for scheduling our daily activities.

THE MERCILESS CROWD

The Prophet ﷺ was strolling through the city one day when he came across a crowd of people on the road laughing and clearly engaged in something seemingly fun. As the Prophet ﷺ drew closer, he saw what they were engaged in—they were laughing while torturing a rooster. The Prophet ﷺ could hardly believe what was before his very eyes! People from his city were laughing while enjoying being cruel to another creature!

The frail rooster in the center of the gathering hopped around in distress, clearly in pain. Loud croaking sounds came from its dry throat. Nonetheless, no one showed any mercy to him at all. Blood trickled steadily down its head, and its feathers were scattered over the ground. Then, the people started throwing stones and firing arrows at the rooster from every angle.

The rooster ran from side to side, desperately trying to dodge the arrows and escape. Soon, the rooster was too weak to even lift itself off the ground. The wounded animal's tired attempts to move only made the crowd laugh harder. The Prophet ﷺ was extremely upset to see so many people around him behaving so horrifically.

He moved through the crowd and stood in front of the rooster in order to shield it. The shower of arrows suddenly stopped, and everyone froze as soon as they saw the Noble Prophet ﷺ standing in front of them.

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ addressed the crowd: "Who are these people? May Allah deprive them of His Mercy!"[1] The words of the Prophet ﷺ seemed to knock some sense into the crowd, and they lowered their heads down in shame. Realizing what they had done, they began to disperse.

Through the Prophet's example, we see that not every form of entertainment is healthy or appropriate. This story gives us an example of a type of entertainment that people had at the time of the Prophet ﷺ and Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. They also used to watch matches or races, and listen to poetry and stories of tradition.

Although much of the type of entertainment that people enjoy in our times did not exist back then, we can still learn some of the basic principles about how to deal with entertainment—and which kinds are permitted and which are not—by studying the advice and guidance of the Noble Qurʾān and the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ.

1 ʿAllāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 64, P. 268.

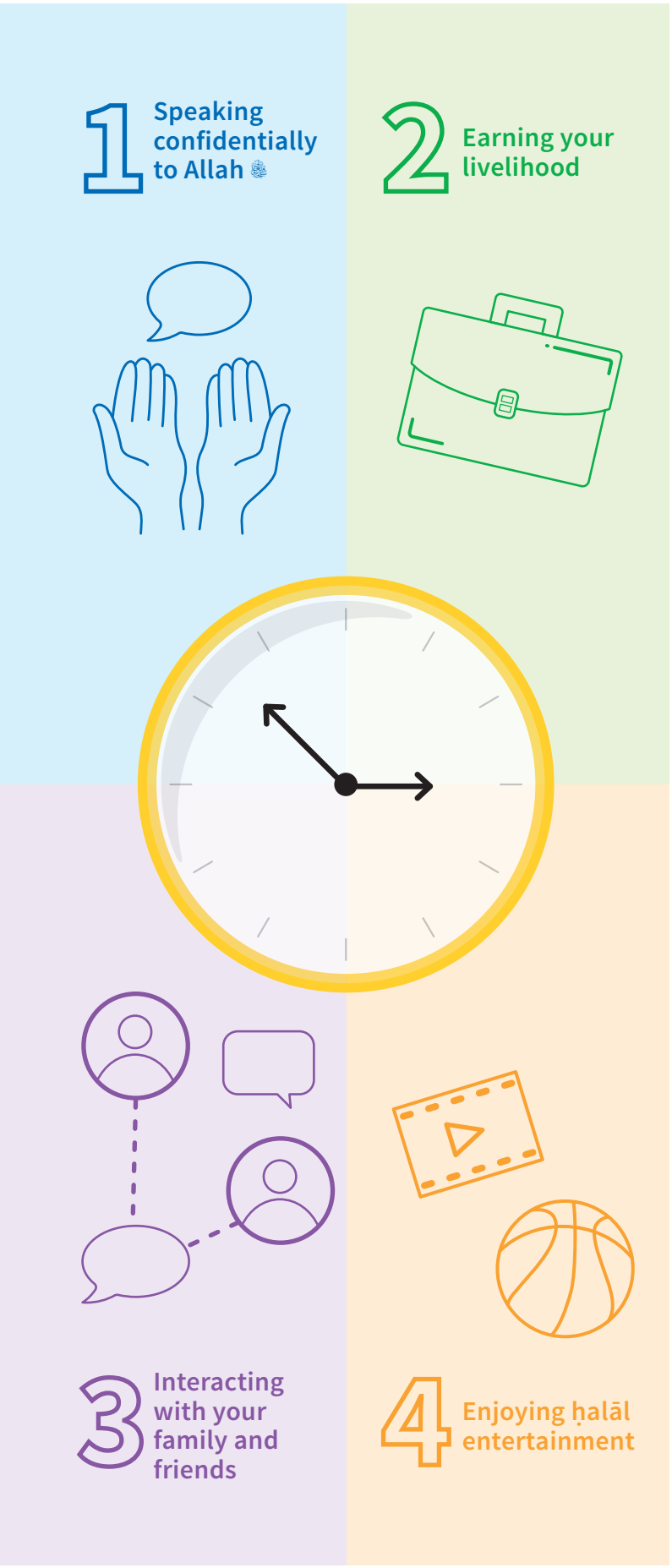
STOP AND REFLECT: Imagine this: everyday, someone deposits $86,400 into your bank account. You can use this money in any way you like, but with one catch: whatever you do not use by the end of the day is taken away from you. What would you do with this money?

SPENDING WISELY

If you were given money in this way, first you would likely make sure that you spend it all so nothing is lost by the end of the day. Second, you would spend it on important things because you do not know if you will receive any money again the next day or not. A wise person would invest this money so they can later reap its benefits.

We all experience this every day, except that instead of dollars or other money currency, Allah ﷻ gives us 24 hours, or 86,400 seconds. This time that we are blessed with is very valuable, and once it is gone we can never get it back. Just like we are careful with money when its amount is limited so that we may maximize the rewards, we should also be careful with our time as it is also limited and we want to maximize what we get out of it beyond everything else.

As we have discussed, our purpose on this earth is a very special one: getting closer to Allah ﷻ. No other creature can get to know Allah ﷻ the way human beings can. If we sincerely wish to fulfill our purpose in this world, then our entire lives should revolve around finding ways to use our time and energy toward this end. What does achieving this purpose actually mean? We know that we cannot spend our whole day on the prayer mat; and Allah ﷻ does not even want this from us! We do however, want to schedule our time and make sure we are using it in the best way possible.


1 Speaking confidentially to Allah ﷻ
2 Earning your livelihood
3 Interacting with your family and friends
4 Enjoying ḥalāl entertainment

The Imāms ﷺ have encouraged us to divide our time into four general sections, as we read in a beautiful *ḥadīth* from Imām al-Kāẓim ﷺ:

إِجْتَهِدُوا فِي أَنْ يَكُونَ زَمانُكُمْ أَرْبَعَ ساعات:ساعَةً لِمُناجاةِ اللّٰهِ، وَساعَةً لِاَمْرِالْمَعاشِ، وَساعَةً لِمُعاشَرَةِ الْاِخْوانِ والثِّقاةِ الَّذينَ يُعَرِّفُونَكُمْ عُيُوبَكُمْ وَيُخَلِّصُونَ لَكُمْ فِي الْباطِنِ، وَساعَةً تَخْلُونَ فيها لِلَذّاتِكُمْ فِي غَيْرِ مُحَرَّمٍ وَبِهذِهِ السّاعَةِ تَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى الثَّلاثِ ساعات

Strive to divide your time into four parts:

(1) Speaking confidentially to Allah [through daily prayers (ṣalāh), supplications (duʿās), reciting and understanding the Qurʾan, and other forms of worship (ʿibādah)];

(2) Earning your livelihood [or studying, or performing other responsibilities like taking care of others, etc.];

(3) Interacting with your family and friends who really care about you, are aware of your needed areas of improvement, and can help you become a better person [in some other traditions, it is mentioned that this portion also includes learning about the religion, and spending time with teachers who will give you advice and help you in your quest for beneficial knowledge]; and

(4) Enjoying permissible (ḥalāl) entertainment—and the purpose of this last one is to help you re-energize so that you can perform your responsibilities in the first three parts.[2]

The last line of this *ḥadīth* tells us that even when we are relaxing or having fun, it is to serve the greater purpose. When we keep this in mind, then even our entertainment will become a tool to reach closeness to Allah ﷻ.

BALANCE AND MODERATION

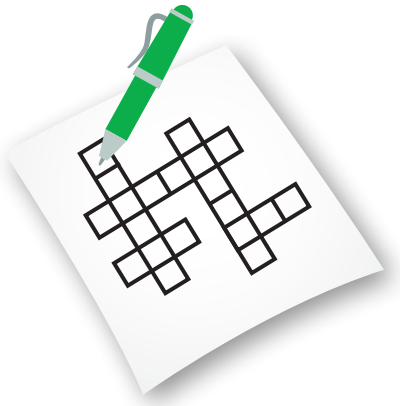
Everything that we do in this world should have a purpose behind it. When we are trying to spend our time wisely, then every moment will serve a purpose, and be made up of two components: intention and action. For example, if we are offering our daily prayer *(ṣalāh)* with the intention of getting closer to Allah ﷻ, then this action will serve the purpose of getting closer to Him. If we do this same action with the intention of showing off, then we will not get closer to Allah ﷻ through our *ṣalāh*. However, if we do something that is forbidden *(ḥarām)*, then even if our intentions are good, we will not get closer to Allah ﷻ. This is why, for example, we cannot steal food and then feed that to the poor.

2 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 75, P. 321.

Similarly, entertainment can fulfill the purpose of us getting closer to Allah ﷻ if the following conditions are met: **(i)** We have the right intention of it being a means toward a greater end; **(ii)** Whatever we are doing or watching in terms of entertainment is permissible *(ḥalāl)*, and does not prevent us from performing our obligations and responsibilities; and **(iii)** It is done in moderation (not in extreme).

Imām al-Kāẓim ؑ said: "The time spent in pursuing legitimate *(ḥālal)* pleasures helps someone with the other aspects of life (including worship)."[3]

Useful entertainment can help us rest and rejuvenate to perform more worship, or fulfill our other responsibilities. It can help us get closer to other believers, for example, when we spend time with our family or friends. Taking a break can also be a way of relaxing our mind and body after a long day of work.



STOP AND REFLECT: What useful types of entertainment do you partake in? How does it help you?

TYPES OF ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment comes in different forms, and people have their own tastes and preferences. One way of breaking down entertainment is into various categories of mental, physical, social, and media.

MENTAL ENTERTAINMENT

One form of entertainment is mental entertainment, or fun activities that use our mind such as puzzles, crosswords, trivia competitions, and so on. Some types of reading can also get us to think and reflect in a positive way. Mental entertainment can help strengthen our intellect, which can become very useful in all areas of life. Sometimes however, mental challenges involve learning useless trivia. At other times, mental entertainment can involve engaging in something forbidden, such as games which involve gambling or betting, so we must be careful not to partake in such kinds of things.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Islam places great importance on physical activities and remaining fit. In fact, one of the principles for strengthening our faith *(īmān)* is to exercise and remain healthy. We have many examples of the Prophet ﷺ and his Ahlul Bayt ؑ participating in different sports and physical activities. However, there are certain physical activities that may not be allowed for us if they could be harmful to our body or health. As well, some sports (such as contact sports that involve touching) should not be done with anyone with whom such physical contact is not permitted. If you have gym class in school in which they engage in dancing, inappropriate gender mixing, or other forbidden activities, then you can get a note to excuse you out of these things.

3 *Biḥār al-Anwār,* Vol. 75, P. 321.

SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT

Often, our time of permissible entertainment is spent with others, such as our friends. This is very important, and Islam emphatically encourages us to spend time with good, righteous friends. However, there are important points to keep in mind when spending time with others. We can turn to the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ for guidelines on what kind of friends we should hang around with, and how we should act and conduct ourselves when with such friends. Social entertainment which includes gossip, backbiting, inappropriate interactions with people of the opposite gender, or going to inappropriate places are not allowed.

MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT

Media entertainment includes any form of entertainment that we experience through reading, watching or listening to something, or from technology—be it in the company of others (like going to a movie, playing video games, etc), or while a person is alone (on one's cell phone, tablet, or when reading books, etc). When we consume any media entertainment, we should keep the ideal purpose of entertainment in mind: something that brings us closer to Allah ﷻ. For this reason, we should be aware and careful of the content that we are consuming. If we are using media entertainment to take a break from our daily routine, then we will not watch something which has any forbidden scenes in it, or anything that will make us distant from Allah ﷻ because of its content, as we will always have our purpose of life in mind.

CONCLUSION

Remember the precious gift—those 24 golden hours—that are deposited into your account every day that you are alive. Now that you have been given some guidelines about how you should use some part of it, let us do some math to figure out how we can maximize the benefits of our time.

You are given 24 hours every day. How should we divide this time up? One example could be as follows:

- **Sleep:** Approximately 8-9 hours (for teenagers).
- **School/work/study:** 8-9 hours (often, the school day will involve some time for physical activity, and socializing/ entertainment).
- **Physical activity:** Around an hour (especially when there is no time set aside for this during a school day).
- **Worship (ʿIbādah):** Enhancing our relationship with Allah ﷻ, and learning about the teachings of our faith—either alone and/or together with others: 2 hours.
- **Family/Social obligations:** This includes helping around the house with chores, personal hygiene and cleanliness, etc: About 3 hours.
- **Entertainment:** 1 hour.
  We should try to make our entertainment not limited to screens and consuming media. Also, remember that the types of entertainment may often overlap (such as playing soccer with friends could be social and physical; or playing an online trivia game could be mental and media entertainment)—so you can combine time!

Reminder: You do not have to divide every single day this way. Some days will look different to others, and things may add up differently! If you spend more hours on entertainment one day, then you may need to spend less the next few days. But remember to be balanced, and have limits on how much time you spend in every aspect of life.

Activity 5.1a: Reflection

Taking into account the types of entertainment mentioned above, reflect on what entertainment you partake in the most, then answer the following questions:

1. Which type of media do you engage in the most? Approximately how much time do you spend on this a day?

2. What is your goal or reasoning for entertainment?

3. Is there a different type of entertainment that might be more useful or beneficial for you? If so, then how?

4. Upon reading this lesson, what goals do you have to ensure that your purpose of entertainment is to bring you closer to Allah ﷻ?

Activity 5.1b: Schedule

Make a schedule for tomorrow, or any average day—fitting in all of the above categories (sleep, school, entertainment, etc).

TIME	ACTIVITY

Now that you have broken down your day into pockets of time, what do you wish to change about how you divide your time? How will this help you become closer to Allah ﷻ?

5.2 Media Literacy

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Recognize the importance of attaining true knowledge in Islam.
- Identify the meaning of media literacy.
- Analyze the reasons it is important to thoughtfully consume media.
- Develop strategies analyzing different types of media.

LEARNING AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'ān:

فَلْيَنظُرِ الْإِنسَانُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِ

"So let people observe their food."[1]

STOP AND REFLECT: How can the word *"ṭaʿām"*—food—in this verse be understood?

When we look into the commentary *(tafsīr)* of this verse, we learn that in addition to the physical food that we consume, we should also be aware of our spiritual consumption, like the knowledge which we receive.

STOP AND REFLECT: What do you think it means if knowledge is considered to be the food—*ṭaʿām*—in the verse? What kind of knowledge should we be trying to gain or avoid?

As human beings, we naturally have a thirst for knowledge. This quality is part of our innate nature *(fiṭrah)*, and the same way that we have guidelines for our other desires, we have guidelines for seeking knowledge as well.

Allah ﷻ is the Source of all knowledge, and His Knowledge is infinite. Our goal with seeking knowledge should be getting closer to Allah ﷻ, so when we try to learn new things, it should be with that intention.

We should be very careful **where** we receive our knowledge from. We must turn to reliable sources to make sure that our souls are receiving the proper knowledge they need. This is especially true when it comes to knowledge about our religion. We should go to trusted scholars *(ʿulamāʾ)*, and read books written by reliable senior scholars in order to learn about our religion.

Sometimes, due to the ease of access to a lot of opinions on the internet and social media, people think they are very knowledgeable because they are exposed to a lot of information. However, with so many posts, articles, videos, etc., it is getting more and more difficult to separate the truth from inaccurate and false information.

STOP AND REFLECT: What are some steps one can take to verify the truthfulness of information that is just "noise"? Who can help you ensure that you are getting knowledge from reliable sources?

1 Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah ʿAbasa (80), Verse 24.

MEDIA LITERACY

Media literacy in the context of what we are learning is using a set of tools to think critically about the information that is presented to us. You may have learned some of these things in school, such as when you were looking for reliable sources for a project you were researching. In an Islamic context, we want to make sure that we are seeking information correctly. Not all information that we find will be relevant or useful for us. There are some things we are better off not knowing! As well, how we go about seeking knowledge is also very important, as is what we do with it.

BE SELECTIVE ABOUT WHAT NEWS WE WATCH

When it comes to watching the news, we should think about who is presenting the information to us, and why they are saying the things that they are. An example that is quite obvious is Fox News. Many people know them to have a strong bias toward their own viewpoints or opinions of the world, but sometimes the problems can be less obvious. Occasionally, we might notice that a news station agrees with some things we believe in, but that does not mean they will always be right.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

1. What are some examples of news shows or stations that say some good things, but also relay certain items which we as Muslims disagree with?
2. What is the reason why news organizations present information?

Some shows that we watch might have various opinions we agree with, but then mix them with certain things which we cannot concur with. For example, they might say that women not being allowed to have an education is a bad thing, but they may also refer to women who wear *ḥijāb* as being oppressed. They might also side with certain Muslim countries because it benefits them, while turning a blind eye to the injustices that are carried out in those countries. They might also paint other countries in an extremely negative light without ever highlighting their accomplishments. In pretty much every case, they are just looking to get high ratings and appeal to people.

When you are watching the news, you should avoid information overload. If you watch a news channel for a while or read many articles, you might notice the same stories or perspectives being repeated. We should avoid occupying our minds with unnecessary information that can prevent us from thinking clearly. News stations invest large amounts of money in trying to see what will get more people to watch their broadcasts. They are also funded by people who want to promote their own views of the world.

It is good to stay informed about what is happening in the world, but it is more important to be confident in your values, and what you know about the world before you listen to the news. For example, if we watch news about Palestine, we should be thinking about the bigger picture and what the real story must be. Over time, you will notice that the stories about Palestine from some news channels or websites always tend to present Palestinians in a negative light.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS

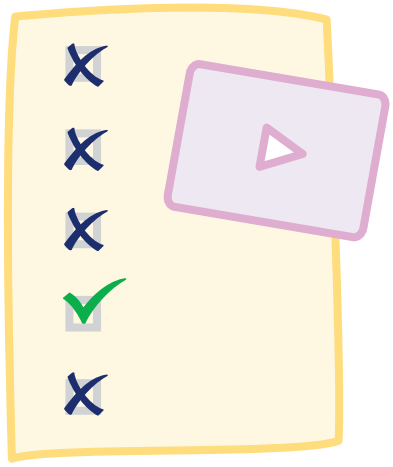
We now have more direct access to news from around the world through social media. For example, Palestinians can now post videos about what is actually happening around them, and news sources have less control. We still have to think critically when we read anything on social media—whether it be news or opinions that people have. One tip to remember is that we do not have to react immediately after we read or watch anything on social media or on the news. Sometimes the news may say one thing, and people on social media may say something else, but usually if we wait for a few hours we will know what actually happened. This often is the case with large tragedies or shootings, where news broadcasts have a story out about what happened before the police even come out with a statement, and later they retract what was initially said. Of course, the police or official government statement might also reflect a bias, so we need to be careful with whatever is said.

TIPS FOR CONSUMING NEWS MEDIA

Try to connect events with the bigger picture.	We often are not given the context for what is truly happening in the news. If something sounds different than what we know to be true, it is important that we look deeper to find the truth.
Try to find reliable sources for non-mainstream news.	Ideally, we would turn to believers and other individuals who are trustworthy and unbiased, who can provide accurate perspectives about current events.
Do not drown yourself in negative news.	Realize that Allah ﷻ is helping people all of the time, and there are many great things happening in the world that are not being highlighted in the news.
Less is more.	We do not need to keep track of everything, or know all of the details of what is happening in the news, as they often repeat negative reports for views. Knowing the bigger picture and keeping aware of major events is more useful.
Have hope in Allah ﷻ.	Make sure to always couple negative news with hope in the help of Allah ﷻ, and the eventual victory of truth over justice. Be confident that Allah ﷻ will ultimately bring about justice, even though He gives people many chances to realize their errors and reform themselves.
Do not consider yourself outside of the news.	Do what your responsibility is in every situation, and *inshāʾAllāh* you can be of help to others. By working hard and allowing Allah ﷻ to show His perfection through you, you can be a force of change for goodness.

BEING SELECTIVE WITH WHAT WE WATCH

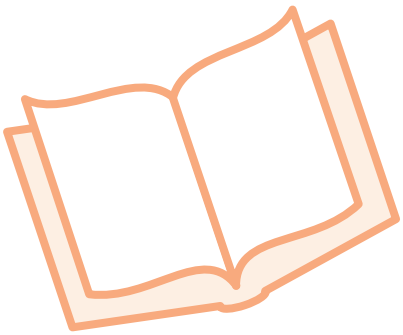
STOP AND REFLECT: Have you ever noticed how watching something can affect your emotions and your mood?



When we want to consume media—like movies, television shows, or video games—we need to be thoughtful about them. In previous lessons, we talked about how entertainment is meant to help us get closer to Allah ﷻ by giving us a break. We should always reflect on what the entertainment we are watching is trying to present to us, and decide whether it is helping or harming us.

BE SELECTIVE ABOUT THE AUTHORS WE READ

Many novels reflect the worst parts about the culture that we are in. We should avoid being polluted by these things. Sometimes, we can be aware of these aspects without being entertained by them. For example, if you have to read a classic book for school, you should be aware of why the country you are in values that book. Not all fiction is bad, but we should also try to balance fiction with some non-fiction, so we can gain some good knowledge as we read.



Non-fiction does not necessarily mean non-entertaining. You can read to learn more about the world, including biographies, almanacs (for example almanacs of plants or animals), or photography books like *Material World* or *Hungry Planet*. You can also read to help you with a hobby or something you want to learn more about, like sewing or woodworking.

SEEK BENEFICIAL KNOWLEDGE

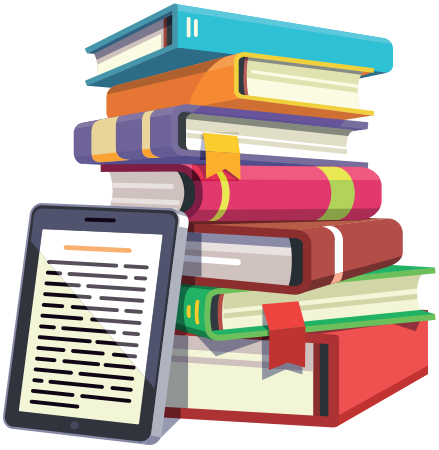
Try to seek out knowledge that is beneficial for our world and the hereafter, and that we can practically apply in our lives. When seeking out Islamic knowledge, make sure to refer to trusted sources—not just googling any question that we have, or looking at any discussion forums, or social media, like Reddit or Twitter.

Remember that true knowledge is not gained solely by gathering information. All knowledge comes from Allah ﷻ. If we act on what we know and what is obligatory *(wājib)*, and stay away from what is forbidden *(ḥarām)*, then Allah ﷻ will guide us to higher levels of understanding and wisdom.

All knowledge comes from Allah ﷻ.

LOOK AT KNOWLEDGE THAT WE LEARN IN OUR TEXTBOOKS WITH A CRITICAL LENS

We have to be thoughtful about the information being presented to us even in school textbooks. History is often written by the winners, and there is a bias and agenda behind everything we read.



For example, when a social studies textbook talks about a war, do they fairly depict both sides of the struggle? Do they present history as having one interpretation, or do they also include alternate views? Do they whitewash the image of leaders or present their true character? Do they present Islam and Muslims in a fair and accurate manner?

For example, one Canadian History textbook says the following:

> *The outbreak of the war in 1914 at first unified the country. Many Canadians—particularly those of British origin—volunteered and fought bravely in Europe. Trench warfare was horrible (...) and casualties were high. In one attack in April 1915, 60 percent of the men in a Canadian division were killed or wounded in a single day. In another day's fighting at the Somme in 1916, the Canadian contingent of 77,000 was ordered to advance part of the line 1km. This was done at the expense of 24,000 casualties.*

STOP AND REFLECT: If this is all that the textbook says about the attack in April of 1915, do you see the bias that it presents? What is it?

A United States textbook used in middle school says the following:

> *Muhammad had not named a successor or instructed his followers how to choose one upon his death. Panic swept through the Muslim community. Muhammad's father-in-law and trusted friend, Abu Bakr, spoke to reassure Muslims. He said: "If there are any among you who worshiped Muhammad, he is dead. But if it is God you worship, He lives forever."*

STOP AND REFLECT: Do you think the book has presented the history of Islam and Muslims in a fair and accurate manner? Why or why not?

RESEARCHING THE INTERNET

When we look up anything on the internet, it is important to ask ourselves:

1. **Do I know who authored this website?**
   We should always look at the about page of a website and try to read who authored the website.
2. **Why did someone make this website?**
3. **When was this website last updated?**
   This can often be found at the bottom of the website page.
4. **Was it the first website you saw?**
   Sometimes these can be ads. People often pay to be at the top of a search engine's webpage (like Google).

CONCLUSION

When presented with any information—whether it be something you watch on the news, media, books, school or anywhere else—we should think critically about it. We have to remember that there is always a reason why someone is presenting the information to us. However, we want to use our knowledge to get closer to Allah ﷻ, and only seek what is true in order to strengthen our hearts and minds. Oftentimes, this means asking ourselves questions about where the information came from, or it could mean avoiding information overload. *InshāʾAllāh* with these tools, we can use our knowledge to get closer to Allah ﷻ.

Activity 5.2a: Research

Research two news articles from different news sources on the same event. For example, find one news article from CNN, and one from Aljazeera or a local news source on the topic of presidential elections. Then, compare the similarities and differences in how the articles are framed using the questions below.

ARTICLE COMPARISON WORKSHEET

1. Title of Article 1: _____
   What does the title tell you about the perspective of the author?

2. Author of Article 1: _____
   Google the author. What did you find out about them?

3. Summarize what the article says about the topic.

4. Title of Article 2: _____
   What does the title tell you about the perspective of the author?

5. Author of Article 2: _____
   Google the author. What did you find out about them?

6. Summarize what the article says about the topic.

7. Compare and contrast the two articles. What are the similarities and differences between what they are saying about the topic?

8. List the resources you used below.

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